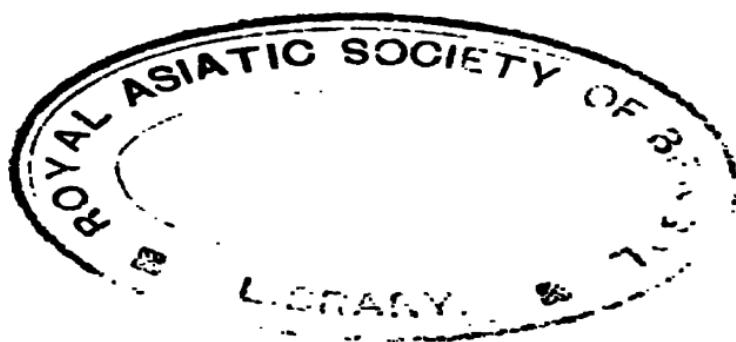


IRELAND— DUPE OR HEROINE







Arthur James Balfour

THE RT. HON. A. J. BALFOUR

From a drawing by Violet, Duchess of Rutland. Published by
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IRELAND— DUPE OR HEROINE

BY

THE EARL OF MIDDLETON
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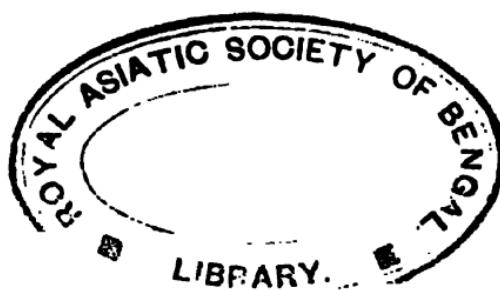
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To
IRISH PATRIOTS WHO DECEIVE THEMSELVES
and
IRISH POLITICIANS WHO DECEIVE OTHERS
I dedicate this brief record of devoted work by
TWO GENERATIONS OF ENGLISHMEN
Sadly misinterpreted to A Generous People

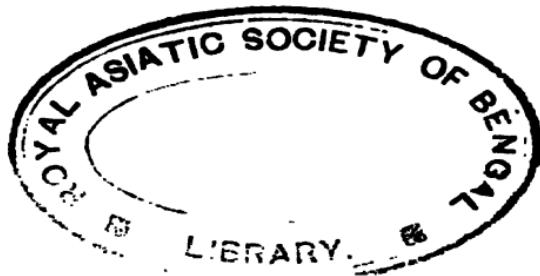


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I desire to express my acknowledgment to the works of Professor Alison Phillips, Sir James O'Connor and Mr. Stephen Gwynn of whose researches I have availed myself in the following pages.

PREFACE

Two years ago when Lord Balfour, better known to his friends and the world as Arthur Balfour, passed away, I received the following letter from his brother, who had been his confidant and among his wisest counsellors for many years of official life:—

*Fisher's Hill,
Woking.
April 21, 1930.*

My dear St. John,

May I revert to a talk you had with my brother Arthur not many weeks before he died, at which I was present? The conversation turned upon Irish histories, and he spoke very earnestly on the false impression concerning the relations between Great Britain and Ireland conveyed by certain recent publications.

He was deeply moved by the fear that these accounts, if left unchallenged, might be accepted for all time as an imputation on British policy during a period for an important part of which he was mainly responsible. No doubt it had been his intention to deal with the subject himself, had he been spared to carry further the Auto-biographical Memoir on which he was engaged, and

which in its unpublished form stops short of his Irish Secretaryship. It was not to be, and he himself was by this time conscious that any serious literary work was henceforth beyond his powers.

It was in these circumstances that he emphatically and even solemnly laid upon you, as his last will and testament—those, I remember, were his very words—the task of giving to the world a truer version of the facts. He renewed this injunction on a second occasion. I wonder whether you propose to do anything to carry out his wishes.

Ever yours,

Balfour.

It happened that as a neighbour I had seen Arthur Balfour twice during his last illness within a few weeks of his death, and I had been deeply impressed by his evident anxiety that the truth about Ireland should be told.

To those who think that Statesmen regard the questions which create party differences only as pawns in a game, it may seem strange that a dying man who had dealt with every problem which could affect his fellow-countrymen during 55 years of public life, including the Great War, should be disturbed as to one topic more than others. Possibly the answer may be found in the heading to the chapter of this book which specially records his work in Ireland, and which could not be written of many people, that “he had an obviously un-

affected interest in Ireland as a country, rather than in Ireland as a cockpit." No man was ever more detached than Arthur Balfour, but no man less mistook the trees for the forest. Unusually apathetic, he formed square to any real emergency. Personal aspects did not appeal to him. At a moment of the greatest tension between Lords Curzon and Kitchener, as regards the Army in India, when each was threatening resignation, he ejaculated. "I don't care whether Curzon resigns, or Kitchener resigns, or they both resign. I mean to have a good Army in India." A man so constituted weighed every problem on its broadest lines.

It was said of Disraeli that he educated his party. Till Arthur Balfour came to the fore the Conservatives were obsessed by the old worn-out ruts of Irish policy; to keep the arena clear; to protect property from organised piracy; to give the peasantry the same outlook as in England and Scotland. Long years of failure had taught politicians very little except to pass laws in themselves sound, even if locally inapplicable. It was borne in on Arthur Balfour that the Gladstone policy of relying solely on Statutes, however intrinsically admirable, was doomed to failure. Even on the rich lowland lands surrounding his Scottish home, he had felt the disastrous result of the fall of prices during the execrable seasons after 1878. What would be the fate of the huddled multitudes in Connemara under such conditions? He felt he could preach on this text with effect to a party buttressed by landowners, though it had left

the great towns and their representatives cold in years gone by.

Arthur Balfour had been 13 years in Parliament, but hardly as many months in office, before he undertook the Irish Secretaryship at the age of 39. He was in every political sense a dark horse. In Society he could hold his own with anyone—indeed at a dinner which he gave in 1884 between two Sittings of the House, at which the “Fourth Party” buried the hatchet with their leaders, he sparred singly with the six guests around his board with astonishing success. But his Parliamentary speaking in those days lacked readiness and fluency—and the subtlety of his thought hardly made up for his lack of popular qualities. Hence his acceptance of the Irish Secretaryship, though of thrilling interest to his friends, was also the cause of anxiety. It had been a post of political destruction to all his predecessors. From the physical standpoint he appeared quite unsuited to it; indeed it was only after a prolonged examination by Sir William Jenner that he was permitted to accept it. Even those most intimate with him knew nothing of the inspiration which he hoped to impart into Irish life; they saw in him only a gladiatorial instinct of finest temper. Yet within a few months, and those among the least promising in the chequered history of Irish Secretaries, he had struck a new note in Irish Government.

Before his death the world had connected Arthur Balfour with many public questions besides Ireland.

P R E F A C E

The fateful years which followed 1887 had reversed the mistakes of a generation. They had established our Foreign Policy on National and non-party lines, had secured it by reforms of our Defensive Forces, to which under Gladstonian rule it had been imputed that "Peace was a necessity"; and had challenged the Liberal monopoly of Social Measures, but all these landmarks had been obliterated by four years of war. I was therefore somewhat taken aback when called upon to vindicate the Conservative Party from the position now assigned to them by the critics of the time-worn Irish controversy. Never, in a Parliamentary friendship of 50 years, could I recall Arthur Balfour showing any anxiety as to self-justification. He preferred that events should speak for themselves. As Dr. Murray Butler recently testified: "He had complete indifference as to what was said or written about him so long as he was doing what he believed was just and right." So new and unexpected an attitude surprised me as much as the suggestion that as he could not hope to write the story himself, I was the person to undertake it.

My claim, if any, to be his interpreter, is a very indirect one. To profess that I know Ireland well, would be to make a pretension which more illustrious personages cited in these pages have wisely forgone. True, I have been associated with Irish property all my life; and though nominally an absentee, have seen more of Ireland than many Irishmen. When I was the

youngest Member of Parliament, owing to the paucity of Irish representatives, I took a part in Irish debates from 1880 onwards to which I had little title, but I was for 12 years subsequently immersed in the administration of the War Office, while the momentous changes carried out in Ireland by the brothers Balfour were in progress, and had consequently no share in them. Indeed the full appreciation of them only came to me when, working for the Southern Unionists in the years before the Treaty, I realised how completely what Lord Salisbury called “Twenty years of firm Government”—perhaps more correctly “Twenty years of sympathetic Reforms”—had changed every Irish problem, and justified the confidence with which the whole Conservative Party had backed its intrepid leader.

For a considerable period before the Treaty in 1921, Balfour had to a large extent drifted away from Irish affairs. He no longer led the party in the House of Commons; he was immersed in the Defence Committee during the War, and preoccupied subsequently with Foreign Affairs. But his work for Ireland was done. Apathy had been replaced by hope; squalor by comfort; the hand-to-mouth existence of the past by substantial savings. There were still two Irelands, North and South, Protestant and Catholic; but the prosperous South was no longer disfigured by western plague spots. Whatever could be done in fifty years to blot out the record of 500 years had been accomplished.

P R E F A C E

In the pages which follow it has been necessary to review the past briefly, in order to make plain how Ireland stood, how she now stands and what she is risking. This has been done without the desire to make a case for any party or the professors of any creed. Nor has Macaulay's test been insisted upon that we should give to "industry and intelligence their natural reward, to idleness and folly their proper punishment." If there is any tie between nations which corresponds to that of parent and child, surely after centuries of association, somewhat more of favouritism is justifiable than that which a victorious power may apply to a conquered province.

If the recital of long-past failures, largely due on both sides to contemporary ignorance and sectarian prejudice, serves to bring into relief the paternal treatment meted out to a somewhat wayward child during the last two generations, the present situation will be clarified and Arthur Balfour's dying request will not have been made in vain.

MIDDLETON.

June, 1932.



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MIDLETION.

June, 1932.



CHAPTER ONE

CHAOS

“If all Ireland cannot govern the Earl of Kildare, then let the Earl of Kildare govern all Ireland.”

King Henry VIII.

To embark upon the well-charted sea of Irish trouble needs an adventurous disposition. Writers of note, from Lecky and Froude in the nineteenth century to Stephen Gwynn and Sir James O'Connor in the last quinquennium have dealt with Irish history faithfully from diverse standpoints. For many years, in proportion as Ireland was the storm centre in the British Parliament, pamphleteers indicted one party or the other to the unending controversy with destructive criticism, and “the State of Ireland” had a recognised place in daily journals on both sides of the Atlantic.

Every aspect of the Irish question has been probed *ad nauseam*, but the greater part of what was written has embittered the problem, without advancing its solution. It has now passed into history, and it may well be argued—Controversy has availed nothing; the case is decided; why not let sleeping dogs lie? The Union has gone; the sacrifices of the last 50 years have been

jettisoned; Great Britain has shouldered all the joint liabilities of the two countries, and a people which may claim without undue National pride that it has shown special genius for Government in the case of alien races under every variety of climate and colour has failed in Ireland on favourable ground after unstinted effort. It has been said that there "is much in history to make men sad, but little to make men wise"; it is therefore the more worth while to examine the cause of a catastrophe which will assuredly influence the future of the British Empire and which may even affect the United States, now holding proudly aloof from European complications.

Up to the last few weeks Statesmen on either side of the Atlantic had gladly closed the door to Irish troubles. England, having written off her past efforts as a bad debt, and Ireland having won her battle, America despite her 18,000,000 of Irish-born population, has apparently lost all interest in her fortunes. There has been very scant reference to Irish affairs in journals on either side of the Atlantic for years past. Yet this very natural detachment has not proved to be permanent; new issues have been forced to the front, and to those who have a love of Ireland, or even something beyond an academic interest in her fortunes, it appears material to consider such propositions as the following:—

To what extent the settlement of 1921 can be justified, and whether the restrictions it contains are of disadvantage to Southern Ireland.

CH A O S

How far we are to be carried by the doctrine of self-determination voiced during the maelstrom after the War by President Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George, as spokesmen of their respective countries—in each case within a few months of their being permanently excluded from power.

Statesmen may ignore the teachings of history and gain a temporary ovation by reckless concessions. But small nations were not merged in larger ones throughout the nineteenth century merely to pander to the ambition of sovereigns. In a great war smaller states inevitably suffer. What example could be stronger than Belgium in 1914, whose sufferings were due solely to her strategical position, whereas Holland, which had been forbidden fruit to Prussia, from the days of Frederick the Great, managed to maintain her neutrality simply because her territory led to the sea on which Germany was weak, instead of to Paris, the natural goal of her legions. As Belgium suffered physically in 1914, the small Danubian States appear to be affected economically in 1932.

Not one of the combatants on any side in the Irish trouble could claim the settlement of 1921 as an ideal solution. So far as Great Britain was concerned, it sterilised all the efforts of 50 years; the extremists on the other side desired then, as they appear to desire now, to keep all Ireland as one; so did the Southern Unionists, who had fought hard for a national settlement. Ulster, on the other hand, wanted no Home Rule

at all, and accepted Partition as a “pis aller.” The non-political Irish merely rejoiced at the cessation of hostilities, with a happy-go-lucky expectation that the war-boom in prices for produce would continue and that taxation would be lower. Out of the scramble emerged the Treaty which it is now proposed to tear up. Even if all parties had been agreed on the Treaty, it was surely an anomaly, however inevitable it may have been at the moment, to divide an island of the size and population of Ireland. The fact that there were racial and other differences to justify it does not secure that such an arrangement will spell prosperity.

Both North and South have done their best in the last ten years, but to establish a nation—which the Free State claims to be—requires something more than a revival of ancient names and economic isolation. If Southern Ireland had a rich country, unworked minerals, in fact all that is essential to manufactures, we might have hoped to see recalled to her shores some of the countless millions who have emigrated from there, and have prospered in foreign lands. But despite her splendid harbours, the wildest visionary has never hoped to see three or four Belfasts arising in the Free State, and even the years which have passed since 1921 have shown that the wand of the conjuror is no more to be found in Irish than in English hands. On the other hand, if we are to blot out the past, ignore the “die-hards” on either side, and look at practical results, the ten years’ rule of Mr. Cosgrave has shown that Irishmen can govern them-

selves with good financial results, reasonable progress and due tolerance of minorities. Is all this to be jettisoned and a fresh plunge made into the unknown?

In reviewing the past from this standpoint, those of us who after long years of effort for Ireland have found ourselves foiled by forces which seem to have recurred throughout her history, may wonder whether even now any lesson has been learned by those most interested in their own salvation. Is wisdom being justified of her children or are self-constituted guides still in the ascendant steering a credulous people into a blind alley?

Few Irishmen examine history except to barb the perorations of their speeches, and few Englishmen in these days look back beyond the barrier of the Great War. But Ireland bases her claims on the past and must face the balance-sheet if it is presented to her.

The present extremists challenge English rule from first to last. In taking up the gauntlet, it will not be necessary to go back to the Dark Ages. As regards Ireland it may be conceded at the outset that whether under her own Chiefs, under the Stuarts, under Cromwell, or under the Protestant ascendancy before the Union, the country endured the very special brand of misgovernment which is incident to a conflict of races and religions with a considerable infusion of national jealousy. But the eloquent chroniclers of Irish grievances always write as if she owed her troubles to others.

The facts are against them. Ireland, under the

system of communal ownership, was an arena on which hostile tribes slaughtered each other and competed for land for 800 years. Life and subsistence were equally precarious. A statute passed at Drogheda, 1451,* is eloquent as to the conditions of the country.

“As the necessity of this land now requires that a Parliament of our Lord the King should be held . . . because that the feast of Easter next coming is so advanced into the summer season that a Parliament cannot be advantageously held after the said feast on account of the impending wars of the Irish enemies of our said Lord the King in Ireland who are wont to go to war immediately after the feast of Easter.”

From the above it would appear that Lord Desborough’s efforts for a fixed Easter would have found influential support from the Plantagenets.

From the earliest records, Kings and nobles, priests and even Saints, contested the sacred “Tara,” robbing and plundering each other, and by the time of the Norman Conquest, foreigners were being called in to take a hand in the game. Henry II, indeed, thought it well to fortify a summons to send troops to Ireland by a Papal Bull—

“Laudably and profitably hath your Excellency conceived the design”—and with this temporal and spiritual “imprimatur” launched an expedition under auspices which might have justified a more scrupulous and moral ruler.

*Stat. 29 Hen. 6. c. 5.

In truth Ireland was no paradise. She was unhappy at home and unrestful as a neighbour. By all the canons of the day she was meet for conquest. John Bull does not readily relinquish a hold once taken, especially when his retirement means a "happy despatch" for all his supporters left behind. Hence it is useless to argue whether England should have held rule over Ireland or not. She was called in; she responded and she remained. On the other hand, if England failed to give Ireland what the most enlightened Governments of the times gave their citizens, making allowance for the accidents of climate and the disturbing force of National temperament, then England stands condemned. But as the main case for Irish independence rests on the assumption that she could have done better for herself than England has done for her, it is most material to review more recent history and to see if Ireland was the victim of some special malignity at any time for centuries past. On such a question it is obviously useless to discuss the shortcomings of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth by the tenets of the twentieth century, but it is very material to know whether Ireland was first or last to profit by the changed attitude of the governing power to the governed for 50 years before 1920, and in this respect to test the random statements of agitators by the ascertained facts.

It is therefore necessary to clear the ground by reviewing history as it bears on two great problems:—

IRELAND—DUPE OR HEROINE

First. Was the backward state of Ireland up to the Union due to her lack of independence.

Second. Could Ireland under any known system of government have retrieved natural and inherited disadvantages faster and more permanently than she did for the half-century before she cast off the yoke of Great Britain in 1920.

The conclusion on these two points may not be without its bearing on the strange mentality of the statesmen at Versailles who turned their backs on recent history, ignored the prosperity of United Germany and United Italy and dotted Europe with independent and not too homogeneous states. President Wilson may perhaps have pondered before he died over the legacy of international trouble he had left to Geneva as the gift of a nation which had fought the greatest civil war in history to keep a vast Continent free from even one such division of power.





THOMAS WENTWORTH. First Earl of STRAFFORD
From an engraving by J. S. Agar, after Van Dyck's
painting at Petworth

CHAPTER Two

P R E - B O Y N E

“I cannot say and no statesman of this age can say that I know Ireland well. Bad communications and the papist influence keep the body of it estranged from us.”

Boyle, Earl of Cork, 1630.

THE man who wrote these lines is said to have landed in Ireland in 1588 with £27 in his pocket; his income was reckoned in 1640 at £50 a day. A record of this kind gives the history of Ireland for 50 troubled years in a pocket-edition. Prejudiced writers and orators have distorted the events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries till it is difficult to sift the wheat from the chaff. The fact is that Ireland was never happy, and negatived any pretence of being a nation through her own divisions. The strife of the native chiefs was assuaged from time to time to make common cause against the English Governors, but these petty potentates quickly fell asunder, and had not even a remote conception of national spirit.

In the fifteenth century, before the religious quarrel became acute and the natural antipathy of the Pope to the Tudors and the Tudors to the Pope poisoned the

relations of the Sovereign with his Irish subjects, the circumstances of the country beyond “the Pale” around Dublin, differed very slightly from that of the troubled centuries before. But from the time of Lord Cork and similar British settlers greater hostility prevailed, and the land provided a source of discord more powerful than politics and almost as lasting as creeds.

The Earls of Kildare who governed Ireland for 50 years were the most prominent of the great Lords who disputed supremacy with each other and the British King. But they were in no sense protectors of native rights. Indeed the attempt to canonise them as patriots is nugatory in view of their forays on each other and the misery of their dependants. The verdict of Lord Wellesley on Doctor Johnson’s verses, that “They were all bad, but some were possibly worse than others,” is not inappropriate to these patriots. The aureole round their heads dates from many years later, when forces which were intermittently destructive were replaced by organised extermination.

The insanity and ignorance which made civil war the normal state of existence contributed to the ultimate British intervention. In an age when differences of creed justified slaughter, and subjects were valued by sovereigns in proportion as they contributed men and money to their aggrandisement, the wretched Irish gave provocation enough for general conquest by adding internal disorder to their other lapses. Hence, when “The Flight of the Earls” to the Continent in 1607 re-

moved their natural leaders, the spoils fell to the victors.

By the custom of the sixteenth century, the lands of rebels were held to be escheated to the Crown or at the mercy of those who had supported the conquerors. Accordingly at this juncture some 500,000 acres in the best Ulster counties were seized and 450,000 of them handed over to "foreigners" at a rent of 1d. or 2d. an acre. The recipients included many, both English and Scotch, who found themselves in Ireland on the same principle that young Englishmen of the nineteenth century who went morally to the bad went physically to the colonies. These unjustifiable transfers, while they did not improve Irish conditions, produced something like peace for 40 years before this unwonted abstinence was terminated by a fresh outburst of savagery.

Whatever the wretched cultivators of the soil suffered under Strafford's confiscations was repaid with interest when the Catholics declared a holy war on the new owners in 1641, and the years of carnage which followed went some way to justify Sir Charles Dilke's allegation that history shows the English to have been an exterminating people. The excesses on both sides are estimated to have destroyed some 500,000 people, one-third of the Irish population. So famed a writer as Spenser, with a prescience for what was brewing, actually advocated extirpation in 1632.

The Irish method of defence was based on lines which led to this result: "The Irish kept their countries of pur-

pose waste, uninhabited, as where nothing is nothing can be got" and the English soldiers laid waste the rest.

A State Paper of 1607 said: "The whole country is waste, those who escaped the sword having perished through famine." The truculent spirit of the Middle Ages meets us at every turn, and Ireland had no monopoly in these respects. We are forced back to the recollection that these horrors were only in accord with the principles of the day. Germany fared worse. The population of the German Empire was reduced from 16,000,000 to 6,000,000 by the Thirty Years War; of 25,000 Bohemian villages, only 6,000 were left standing; the Palatinate was a desert.

In 1653 Cromwell, taking his cue from the Continent, dealt what was intended to be the crushing blow to insurgent Ireland. Democratic scorpions were substituted for Royal whips. Having already deprived 8,000 Catholic owners of their lands, he decreed that "all the Irish were to remove beyond the Shannon before May 1st, 1654, and those found on the east side of the river after that date were to be condemned to death." In the following year a punitive Navigation Act decreed that Irish goods could only be carried in English ships. Can anyone wonder that after three centuries the name of Cromwell still helps agitators to keep alive the hatred of Great Britain?

After the Restoration, England rapidly threw off the Puritan intolerance of the Cromwellian period, but the permanent attitude of Catholics and Protestants to





OLIVER CROMWELL

From an engraving by E. Scriven after the painting by R. Walker
in the National Portrait Gallery, London

each other all over the world was such that a different form of Christianity appeared to these Christians to be worse than heathenism. Irish writers have put in a plea that whereas persecution of minorities, whether of Protestants by Catholics or the reverse, was world-wide, Ireland was alone in furnishing a majority who were the victims. The plea does not carry us very far. Both being unpardonable, State Policy in the Middle Ages no doubt concluded that to persecute a majority was dangerous, while to drive a minority to despair was innocuous. In any case, Ireland had ample grounds for regretting the declaration of the Papal Nuncio, who in 1606 was sent to stimulate the failing energies of the rebel leaders. He proclaimed solemnly that "No Catholic could without sin submit to a heretic sovereign, far less take part against the faithful who were in arms for Holy Church." This was a declaration of war with a vengeance—a not unnatural step by a Pontiff who had been flouted by a "heretic" sovereign, but furnishing exactly the excuse required for the wholesale maltreatment of those whom the Pope could stimulate but not protect.

One result, however, can be traced directly to this welter of misgovernment. With no contending chiefs in the ascendant local jealousies died down. The natural divisions yielded place to the fear of outsiders who obeyed no laws and kept no promises. If old feuds were not forgotten, and no feud is wholly buried in Ireland, new links were forged by suffering under a common

oppressor. There was distinct evidence in the reigns of the later Stuarts of the birth of a National Spirit in Ireland, and of a new hopefulness. Charles II showed the country some tolerance. The Catholic population were not harassed by any penal laws. There was no new or extraordinary taxation, but the revenue none the less rose in 1663 to £219,000; no doubt it would have been higher but that the absentee landlords, the creations of Charles' immediate predecessors, had £157,000 remitted to them in one year. James II during his brief reign naturally showed leanings to the one part of his dominions which was impeccable from a religious stand-point.

Reforms were initiated. The haphazard grants of land by James I, Charles I, Cromwell and Charles II, which cancelled and overlapped each other, were reviewed after 1660 by a Committee of the Privy Council, which, according to a typical Irish writer, was of rigid impartiality, since two of the Commissioners were for Charles, two were for Cromwell, and the Chairman was for himself! Land values rose, prices improved, and manufacturing industry began afresh. To some extent the forfeitures were annulled; prosperity began to return; the population, as always in Ireland, was quickly recovering the awful losses of 1641, and the retribution which followed it. The nation had glimmerings of concerted action. New Irish leaders indulged in a glorious Indian summer of hope of an Ireland of their own.

Then came the flight of James II from England and

his inevitable attempt to marshal the Catholic Irish against his rebel Protestant subjects. Every element of Irish difficulty was roused afresh. Even the suspicion that Strafford was raising an Irish army to support Charles I against his subjects had brought him to the block fifty years before. To the English, who had fought a desperate struggle for freedom and religious toleration, to have both threatened by an appeal to Ireland was anathema. The Irish rising in favour of James II was rendered additionally offensive when it was found that the Catholic Church was forcing an issue which could regain for her the one sphere of authority under the British crown of which she had not been wholly bereft by the Tudors. To orthodox Britons there were now three things to be guarded against in Ireland; a population not self-supporting which would compete with their foodstuffs and manufactures; a man-power which had been twice invoked by English sovereigns against their British subjects, and a religious tyranny which had been kept at bay in England for 150 years.

Ireland itself was flung into two camps; the memory of all the tortures, burnings and reprisals of 50 years before was stirred afresh. People living in amity again flew at each other's throats. But this was not the worst development from the Irish standpoint. William III, like Cromwell, was a great soldier; neither leader had any use for forays and skirmishes. With past records of failure, they both attempted a genuine conquest of the country. This was an unforgivable departure from

Irish traditions. For centuries parts of the country had been unsafe or at least “unhealthy” for certain persons or classes. But this proscription of localities is a familiar feature even in such advanced Societies as New York and Chicago to-day, and can be met by keeping to safer paths.

If we recall the strange obtuseness which misled nations and political parties all over the world in relation to the World War and the recent financial crash, we realise that elementary lessons are not easily learned with every modern appliance for education and publicity. How little then did the general trend of events concern any country three centuries ago? To the Irish, accustomed to local squabbles, the operations of William III to subdue the country were a hateful innovation. Here was legitimate and admitted war. Against the English were Sarsfield, Tyrconnel and other Irish heroes, whose admiration of their great opponent was voiced by Sarsfield as he left the field of battle at the Boyne:—“Change Kings and we will fight you again.” But James fled and William remained. Considerable forces equipped with a well-served artillery, not merely subjugated “the Pale,” but struck deep into Munster and Connaught. A spirited resistance by the Irish secured the Treaty of Limerick, which was flagrantly violated by the conquerors, and large deportations followed it.

The disposition of Ireland to charge all mistakes to others was thus placed on a sure foundation. England

was henceforth the culprit. The pressure of the iron hand had been felt to such a degree that all the lapses of intermediate authority were merged in it, and it was not difficult on these lines to sustain a hatred of the oppressor. Thus the months of contest before and after the Battle of the Boyne left an indelible mark on Ireland itself as well as on Anglo-Irish relations. For ever afterwards there were two Irelands: Catholic and Protestant, South and North, anti-England and pro-England. From the reign of James II to that of George V the chasm so created was never bridged.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE BOYNE TO THE UNION

“The evil that men do lives after them.”

Shakespeare.

RETRIBUTION is in many respects the strangest and most constant factor in human affairs. Events apparently long forgotten, and injuries long since atoned for, have an impish way of dominating innocent lives and frustrating long years of progress. No one can wonder if the autocracy of Czar rule following on two centuries of serfdom killed the soul of Russia, but it is strange to find in the provinces of France to-day the old suspicion dating from 1789 of the Aristocracy and the Church, although the power and possessions of both have been obliterated for four or five generations.

Tradition dies hard. The lowland Scots with only a geographical line between them and the border English with whom they have been so long in union, manage to preserve their racial characteristics, and there are still parishes in England in the twentieth century lying adjacent to but absolutely declining co-operation with each other on the ground that they were Royalist or Roundhead respectively in 1640.

We must not therefore be surprised if Ireland, which had more than her share of the “whips and scorns of time,” and has a Bourbon pride in learning nothing and forgetting nothing, succeeded in fostering before the Union a sense of grievance which has lasted to this day. In Ireland no claim is ever wholly abandoned. As late as 1923 a small estate was put up for sale near Wexford. A person of competence and standing attended and forbade the sale, as his ancestors had been dispossessed in 1641! Even in the case of an out-and-out purchase the amount paid may be challenged 50 years later. At first sight this is justifiable, but the extent to which England can be held responsible, and the degree to which the National character of Ireland kept her from the rebound which other backward countries showed after similar troubles require examination.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Ireland was undoubtedly exposed to disabilities wholly unjustifiable by modern standards. The establishment of penal laws for Catholics, while Protestants of the same race ruled them; the extraction of tithes for an alien Church, and of excessive rents for absentee landlords; the charges on the Irish Exchequer for English foibles; all these have been catalogued and castigated time and again and for 50 years past they have not had a defender. But the recital of them, like the carnage of the previous century, leaves us cold when we think of France at the same period under Louis XV, Prussia under Frederick,

or Russia under Paul. European civilization made meagre advance before the French Revolution, and our boasted “Merrie England” itself was a dream in which the fortunate few were separated from the many by an impenetrable haze.

Beyond this, the best Government, and that of England was far from impeccable, cannot control adverse natural conditions. In an age in which every country decided for itself the relative rights of the sovereign, the noble and the proletariat, the functions of Government were wholly different from those of the present day. Questions of peace and war, taxation, and civil liberty formed the natural arena on which rulers were called to account. Much was forgiven to a strong Government which, apart from maintaining the National spirit, could command such respect from neighbours as to give fresh outlets for trade. But the responsibility of Modern Government as we understand it was practically non-existent. There was no sort of attempt by the rulers to equalise the lot of different classes of subjects. If communications were bad or wages were at starvation point in certain districts, there was no call to improve them. If the housing in most towns and on many estates was phenomenally bad it remained so. The great array of social services, which has overshadowed all other political issues in the present day, had hardly a single exponent until after 1830.

Hence, when we are asked to think of Ireland as she

was under the penal laws as compared with what she might have been with enlightened rulers, it is absurd to judge the shortcomings of Great Britain before or after the Union by a philosophy which no nation of that age applied to its most favoured subjects.

It is, moreover, impossible to strike a balance between countries when natural conditions are allowed to work out their own salvation.

Ireland has a poor climate and France a notably favourable one. Consider none the less the condition of the French peasantry throughout the eighteenth century. Was the revolution of 1789 less necessary for France than Catholic Emancipation and freedom of trade for Ireland?

Irish poverty was bad enough. But for a century after Irishmen ceased to be shipped to the plantations, the German princelings were still selling their subjects as food for cannon in wars in which they had only the interest of pecuniary gain. Irish hovels were a scandal up to the Union, and for years afterwards, but were Russia or Italy in better case? It is indeed alleged that even up to the Great War of 1914 the Russian peasant had, in respect of food, housing and clothing gained nothing, and, except by the abolition of serfdom, had scarcely changed conditions which dated from Peter the Great.

In truth, Irish writers who ascribe the unhappy condition of Ireland after the Union to previous mis-government overstate their case. English critics pre-

sent an equally defective view on the other side. The inefficiency of the British Government and of other contemporary Governments to deal with such a problem as Ireland presented is established, but let not that obscure the problem.

Here was a country which even under the best auspices must be mainly dependent on agriculture. Its manufactures, even after a century of progress, are still almost exclusively confined to the North. At the moment of writing a great proportion of the revenue in the Free State is provided by Guinness' brewery. The South could not then and can hardly now maintain its prolific population. Between 1700 and 1800 it rose from 1,500,000 to 3,500,000; between 1800 and the Famine from 3,500,000 to 8,000,000. However just the laws as to trade or the tenure of land might have been, there was a large surplus population to dispose of, and history teaches us that when it is a case of seeking fortune in a new sphere, the adventurous and most reliable persons lead the way. Men who desired a career went abroad. It is calculated that between 1691 and 1745, no less than 450,000 Irishmen died in the French service alone. Emigration claimed many more in the later years of the century. One third of Wellington's army were Irishmen. England may fairly be blamed for the lack of economic progress between 1700 and 1780, but if Ireland had prospered proportionally to England during those years, there must still have been a huge exodus of the most capable citizens.

The only salvation for Ireland would have been if some statesman with the insight of 1880 had legislated for Irish land in 1770, but to inculcate such doctrines as the "Three F's," by which a tenant became entitled to a Fair Rent, Fixity of tenure, and Freedom to sell improvements made by himself, in any part of the world in the eighteenth century would have been as easy as standing a pyramid on its apex. As a fact, all land systems were a scandal. A century which tolerated a non-tax-paying nobility and a peasantry subject to the corvée in France; serfdom in Russia; starvation in Germany, could not realise the Irish system as intolerable.

The doctrine that Property has its duties as well as its rights was not yet promulgated, and Irish landlords, apart from absenteeism, were bad enough. But the system if a "tragedy for the people" was by no means a "comedy for the nobles." To give the devil his due, there was not much temptation to live in a land with communications so wretched that the famine of 1741 claimed almost as many victims as the massacres of 1641; with an unsympathetic—at times, dangerous—population, and at the mercy of a sadly inefficient Parliament. Whether owners were resident or not, the land was mainly let out to middlemen, who paid the landlord a moderate rent and harassed the cultivator for double or treble the amount. The system of auctioning each holding at the end of a lease, and the reckless bidding of the farmers doubled the disparity be-

tween a fair rent and a hopeless burden.* The profits of middlemen—especially in Ulster—stimulated proprietors to exact fines on renewal of leases. Lord Donegall asked for £100,000 for such renewals in 1763. The tenants could not pay. Some wealthy Belfast merchants obtained the lands, converted them into pasture, and turned the tenants adrift. Many of them filtered over to New England with hearts burning with indignation. For several years some 4,000 emigrants from the North found their ways to Virginia and Pennsylvania and founded the linen trade there. Can we wonder that the connection between Northern Ireland and the American rebels against England became a close one? Some of Washington's best soldiers were of Northern Irish stock, and Lord Donegall had no inconsiderable share in releasing the New World from its thraldom to the British Crown.

The whole question called for drastic reform and got it, as in many other countries, a century late. But there was no question of such measures from any Irish source before the Union. The Irish leaders in 1798 trumpeted the woes of the country, but they ignored the cultivator. Grattan asked for Economic freedom; O'Connell subsequently banked on Catholic Emancipation and Repeal, but their splendid records of rhetoric give but a meagre presentation of the intolerable state of the land system.

* Even in 1872 the writer personally heard three would-be tenants who had bid against each other 300 per cent. in excess of the value of a small vacant farm, express strong resentment when the landlord added it to the neighbouring holding at the current rent.

In truth, Irishmen high and low had grasped at the shadow of power so long that they lost hold of the substance of prosperity. Much must be forgiven to a people who have been the victim, as Swift said, of a "million discouragements." In addition where the population is too large there must be many unemployed, and nothing, as we have found to our cost in more recent days is so demoralizing to the mass as unemployment. Idleness is a catching complaint. To say the Irish were incurably idle would be a generalization by no means applicable to thousands of small cottiers who slaved from morning to night. But the nation was thriftless. From time immemorial stocks had been raided and destroyed, and there was little of that "gathering into barns" which figured in *Holy Writ* 1,800 years before. There was everywhere a lack of system, and co-operation, and the natural leaders of the people preferred the salons of Dublin to the hovels of Munster and Connaught. The very men who ought to have been pressing Parliament to remedy material conditions were content to make vapouring speeches against the Government, to whom behind the scenes they were cadging for pensions and titles.

Prejudiced writers picture Ireland before the Union as an El Dorado; even Castlereagh mentions the strides she had made in the years before the Napoleonic wars. But the real picture was appalling. Dublin, with pretensions to fine buildings and the trappings of wealth, was the best advertisement for the country. Yet the

poorer part of Dublin was a cesspool; two or three families would pay two shillings a week as joint tenants of a single room. Beggars swarmed in the streets. Shelley "had no conception of what human misery could be" till he visited Dublin. The English House of Commons after the Union investigated the condition of a Foundling Hospital in Dublin on whose books during 10 years nearly 20,000 children had been entered, of whom 17,000 were dead or missing, and substantiated charges which the Dublin Corporation had ignored.

From the agricultural standpoint, the country was terribly behind the times. Arthur Young, in 1778, calculated that it would cost nearly £100,000,000 to bring the products of Irish land at this period up to the English standard. He computed the rent then payable at the preposterous sum of £6,000,000.

Lord Clare in 1787 said: "It was impossible for human wretchedness to exceed that of the miserable tenantry of the province of Munster." In 87 selected cabins, 127 pigs and 47 dogs—all indoor residents—attested the wealth of their owners.

In 1796 the labourer, if paid in money, received 6d. a day. The country was bankrupt; the currency was debased. In truth, the Irish Parliament, over whose decease so much vapouring oratory has been expended, was of all bodies the most corrupt and inefficient.

But England played into Irish hands. Statesmen,

then too often, as now, engrossed by the immediate effect of measures on votes, were blind to the ultimate results of policy. The American colonies had cost many military expeditions and much money to retain; they must pay their way, and therefore Colonists must be taxed. Similarly, Ireland did not contribute her full share to United Kingdom expenditure; therefore the £600,000 which she contributed must be spent in England and accommodated to British requirements. Short-sightedness had further reactions. According to modern ideas the connection between Ireland and America was not close, but it was close enough to make a surrender in one case inevitable in the other. Ireland, swayed by the conditions as to trade denied to the United States, would have gladly made common cause with her in the fight. In any case, after the Declaration of Independence in 1781, the demands of Ireland became irresistible. The Presbyterians of the North were in touch with America, the Catholics of the South were inspired by France. In 1782, to avoid a complete rupture, the Ministry of Fox and Rockingham made a *volte-face* and in set terms granted all the Irish Parliament had then demanded—complete freedom as to taxation and laws. The surrender was even more complete than that of Mr. Lloyd George in 1921. Ireland acclaimed a great National victory. But those who gained it saw it promptly frustrated.

Ireland has always been her own chief enemy. In accordance with the whole tenor of Irish history from

A.D. 420 to the present day, leaders, united in the face of a common enemy and an overwhelming danger, quickly fell asunder. The Irish Parliament, backed by the Volunteers, had been strong enough to bring England to reason, but it in no sense represented the Irish nation. The Catholics, three-fourths of the population, could not vote. Of 300 seats in the Irish House of Commons, 212 were private property, and of these more than half had practically no voters. In fact, as a representative assembly the Irish Parliament was a myth. Grattan declaimed against this absurd inequality, but Flood defended it with compelling eloquence. In consequence, England's important though belated gesture perished still-born. Instead of going to their homes, reaping to the full the benefits of freedom, and developing the trade and manufactures for which they had so long contended, the Irish merely exchanged one agitation for another. Rival parties were formed within the newly emancipated assembly; bitter words were exchanged. The stage was set for a final struggle founded on the bad old lines of cleavage. The Catholic majority may have been mainly responsible for the mischief of a century before; the intolerance of the Protestant leaders now prevailed and provoked the nemesis of 1798.

The story of the Irish rebellion, its attendant massacres, and the subsequent Union, has been told so often that nothing would be gained by recapitulating it. Lamentations over the lost legislature were grown on

thin soil with plenty of rhetorical manure. Tried by all modern standards the Irish Parliament could hardly find a supporter. Apart from being, like the English Parliament, totally unrepresentative of the mass of the people, its crew of hungry place-and-pension-hunters had so lowered its prestige that it became a national asset only when threatened with extinction. It was obviously anathema to the Catholics, who, in consequence, largely supported the Union. It commanded no sympathy from the mass of poverty-stricken tenants whose misfortunes it had treated with the "despitefulness of the proud." Ireland has been famed for never knowing what she wanted, but whatever it was, it was not the assembly which had occupied College Green.

The execrations which have been showered on Pitt for the policy and method by which the Irish Parliament was induced to vote its own extinction now leave posterity cold. England, engaged in a struggle for bare existence, could hardly tolerate the activities of a rebel people over one-third of her numbers on her flank. The situation was serious even from a financial standpoint. No exchequer could stand the double charge of war and rebellion. The Irish debt had risen from £2,000,000 to £28,500,000 in seven years from 1793, of which £6,000,000 was due to Civil tumult, and £1,500,000 to bribery. In 1793 one eighth of the Irish revenue went into the pockets of placemen. Meantime the British debt, borne by a population of only 12,000,000,

was £420,000,000. The continued rule of the scatter-cash Irish gentry immortalized by Lever, would have violated every economic law. Whether the Union was just or not, it is probable that no country in Europe situated as England then was would have hesitated to tie the Gordian knot on which so many adverse diatribes have been expended.

To justify or blame either party seems at this distance of time to be beside the point. The only ground for maintaining an Irish Parliament was not to gratify idealists, but to benefit a distracted country. In 1800 the elective body in every country, according to the canons of the time, was confined to the educated class, which, whether Catholic or Protestant, was in Ireland almost entirely landed, leisured and retrograde. Reform would have changed personnel, but not policy. As will be seen in the review of Ireland after the Union, Irish representatives in the British Parliament, ample in numbers, whether before Catholic Emancipation or subsequently, failed to press the desperate straits of the Irish population on the Parliament at Westminster, or even to support British Ministers, who were less prejudiced and more public-spirited in relation to Irish troubles. The characteristic plaint of an Irish patriot M.P. in the 'eighties: "So long as Ireland was silent as to her woes, England was deaf to her cries" fairly summarised the confusion and inaccuracy of history as read from the standpoint of Irish sentiment. The claim of solid writers that the real damage done to Ireland by

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the Union was that it prevented the decent growth of public opinion is equally unsustainable. The whole century of Irish politics preceding it furnished the scantiest evidence of any transfer to National aims of the forces so long mobilised for party manœuvres.



CHAPTER FOUR

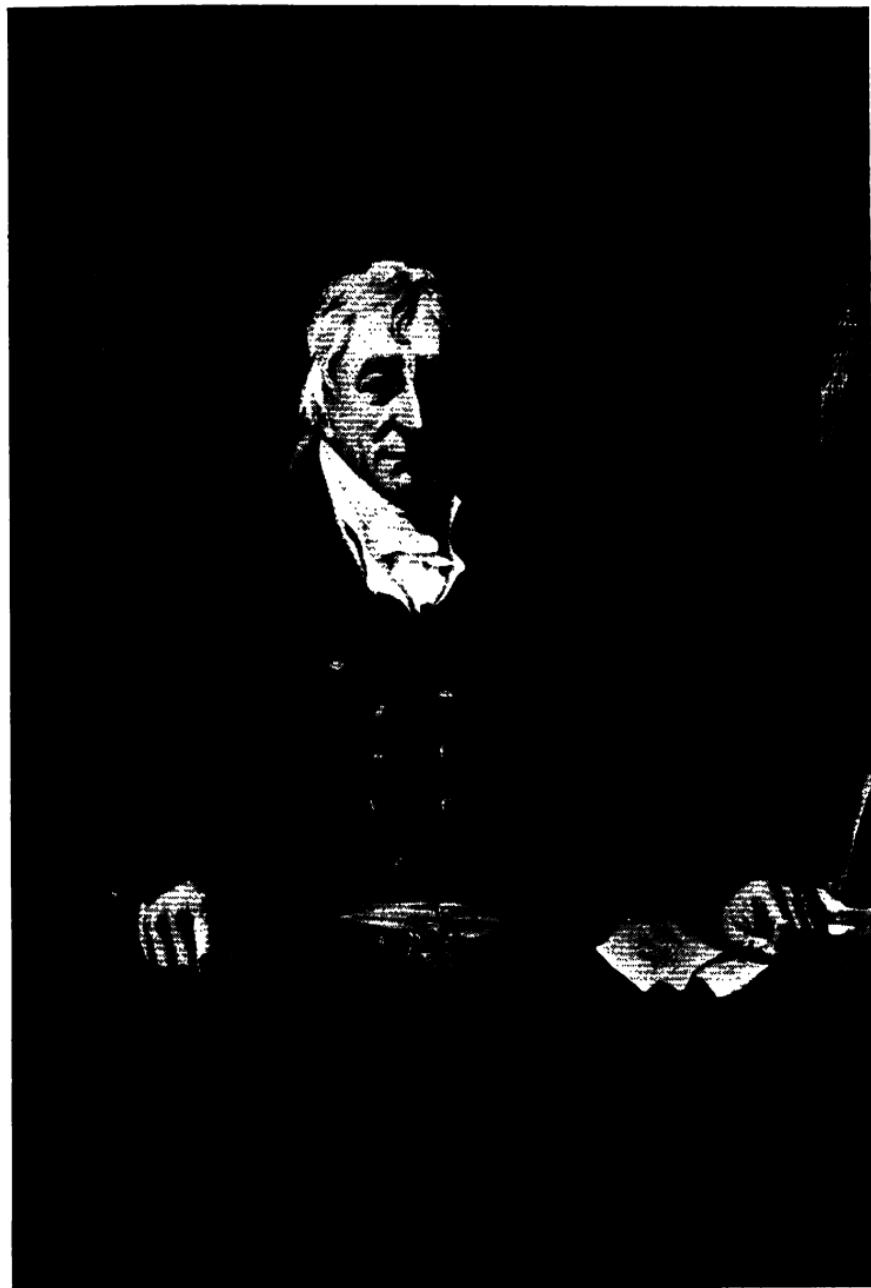
'LAISSEZ FAIRE'

"The main fact of Irish history in the first 50 years of the legislative Union is that the population almost doubled, while the resources of the country did not materially increase."

S. Gwynn, *History of Ireland*.

THE legislative Union was the abolition of make-believe, and, after the Act became law, it becomes difficult to disentangle the history of Ireland from that of Great Britain. Nothing would be easier than to follow writers who, with a glorious disregard of current events, have framed an impeachment of one country or the other for the failures of the vital years between 1800 and 1850, but a generation which 14 years after the end of a world war is still absorbed by its undreamt-of and unparalleled effects must exercise some sympathy with the shortcomings of their forefathers.

The moral influence of the French Revolution had accentuated the material difficulties of the time a hundredfold. To the subjects of George III the overturn of the royal power in France was not merely the substitution of one form of Government for another. It had been made the pretext for appalling crimes; it



THE RT. HON. HENRY GRATAN

From an engraving by C. Turner after the painting by J. Ramsay



had let loose on neighbouring countries an organised piracy more dangerous than that of Frederick of Prussia or any other absolute ruler, and it had cost Europe 25 years of war and complete economic exhaustion.

Many leading thinkers were so completely convinced that the nation was hovering over an abyss, that Burke in a famous speech even doubted if there could be a hope of a civilized posterity for whom to labour.

Canning, speaking in 1820, held that “a House of Commons, if a direct effectual representation of the people, would constitute a pure democracy and must in a few days’ sitting sweep away every other branch of the Constitution that might attempt to oppose or control it. So it had been in 1648; so it would be again.” The Duke of Wellington repeatedly expressed his conviction that after the Reform Bill of 1832, England could not be governed.

Dr. Lingard wrote of England at this period: “The whole fabric of the civil Government was nearly dissolved. Injuries were inflicted without provocation and retaliated without mercy. The Saxon, like the Dane, had imbibed a spirit of insubordination and a contempt for peace and justice and religion.”

In face of these apprehensions it is hardly a matter of wonder that England, occupied for the first 15 years of the nineteenth century in fighting for her existence, for the second—1815-1830—in licking her wounds, and throughout the half-century to 1850 in facing internal problems, such as Parliamentary Reform, the Poor

Law and Free Trade, already deferred for 50 years by the general upheaval, failed to project herself forward to tenets of government not held by any contemporary state. Indeed, until 1840, Sir Robert Peel, the earliest convert to a wiser policy, showed a want of sympathy with and appreciation of Irish needs which in a man of such enlightenment furnishes the strongest proof of the obtuseness which misguided nine-tenths of his contemporaries.

Lord Macaulay, writing in 1830, saw the position in proper perspective, but he did not minimise the existing depression. "The present moment is one of great distress, but how small will that distress be when we think over the history of the last 40 years; a war compared to which all other wars sink into insignificance; taxation, such as the most heavily taxed people of former times could not have conceived; a debt larger than all the public debts that ever existed in the world added together; the food of the people studiously rendered dear; the currency imprudently debased and imprudently restored."

England was suffering from Constitutional drawbacks besides unrestrained poverty. Statesmen who had to maintain the royal authority, while other thrones were tottering, had no sinecure. George III, wrong-headed though he may have been, was a puissant force from 1760-1790. Then came the days of madness, the transient relief from which was punctuated by his plea to his Ministers not to bring on

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his illness afresh by pressing such objectionable measures as Parliamentary Reform and Catholic Emancipation. The single dictum of a prejudiced lawyer that the latter would be a violation of the King's Coronation oath postponed the most urgent measure of the time for 30 years and incidentally ruined Pitt's Irish policy.

The transfer of the Royal power to the Prince Regent and the ten years' reign of George IV justified Wellington's conclusion, that the first duty of a subject was to get the King's Government carried on, and the seven years of the King's good-natured successor, utterly unversed in politics, and living from hand to mouth, completed a period of nearly half a century in which the monarchy was the subject of apology rather than of that reverential esteem which has now been the greatest permanent asset of the country for 100 years.

Even if statesmen had not been handicapped by the special difficulties mentioned above, we have only to consider our own experience during the last 14 years to realise how chaotic must have been British conditions after Waterloo. The habits of war had to be forgotten. The lessons of peace had to be learned. Industries connected with the supply of war material were dropped summarily; men were discharged by thousands and trod the streets in rags; the Continent opened again; the value of money was completely altered. High taxation so handicapped the landowners that they adopted all kinds of expedients to rid their estates of surplus population, the maintenance of which fell upon

them. Ireland was not the only country needing the reminder that “Property had its duties as well as its rights.”

With all these disturbing forces at work, came the discovery of steam power and the great development of machinery, which was to turn a country, hitherto largely dependent on agriculture, into the greatest industrial nation in the world.

In the retrospect all will concur in condemning the short-sightedness of these who left the suffering incident to these great changes to work out its own remedy. But there is something to be said on the other side. The heart-searchings of some contemporary statesmen were genuine and persistent, but there were no precedents nor any ascertainable limit of the economic Frankenstein which had appeared. Moreover, our ancestors banked on the punishment of crime, not on its prevention; the starving boy who filched a half-crown went to transportation in company with the worst criminals. Statesmen were throughout engrossed by the imminent problems; how to stave off revolution by Parliamentary Reform; how to protect the new machinery; how to keep the people fed, and while cheapening food and other commodities to avoid ruining the overburdened landlords, and encroaching on an already exhausted exchequer. Still, making every reasonable allowance, it is difficult to believe that only 100 years ago masses of our fellow-countrymen were enduring conditions, which, if Alva had deliberately imposed them on the Netherlands a

‘LAISSEZ FAIRE’

century and a half before, would have added an even deeper tint to his infamy. The old method of life under which the agriculturist was himself a small manufacturer having gone, “everyone scrambled for himself, the rich became richer and the poor poorer, while the law, instead of attempting to redress the balance interfered heavily on the side of the employer.”

In 1812 Byron, whose testimony on facts should perhaps be taken with some reservation, said in his maiden speech in the House of Lords: “I have been in some of the most oppressed provinces in Turkey, but never under the most despotic of Infidel governments did I behold such squalid wretchedness as I have seen since my return in the very heart of a Christian country.”

As the century went on, Byron’s opinion was confirmed in more solid quarters, especially by the reports of Commissioners and Parliamentary Committees, whose diagnosis of the evil was more thorough than the remedies applied.

Great writers told the gruesome tale remorselessly. Carlyle said: “It is not a joyful mirth, it is sadder than tears, the laugh Humanity is forced to, at ‘Laissez Faire,’ applied to poor peasants in a world like our Europe of the year 1839.” Disraeli, in *Sybil* (1841), so gibbets these monstrosities that his worst enemy would hardly have grudged him power earlier than 1874 to strike a blow for humanity. He writes of a population driven into the town of “Marney” to rid the landlords of their maintenance; whole families “living, for years

together, in a single unlighted room with no hearth, and water streaming down the wall; a floor of mud; the street a reeking dung-hill.” In support of these assertions Disraeli stated in his preface: “There is not a trait in this work for which I have not the authority of my own observation or the authentic evidence which has been received by Royal Commission or Parliamentary Committees.”

Jephson’s *Sanitary Evolution of London* says of Clerkenwell that the shallow well water of the parish received “the drainage water of Highgate cemetery, of numerous burial-grounds and of the innumerable cess-pool of the district,” and this with scores of houses in the vicinity.

From these death-traps, women and children went to work for 14 hours a day, in an atmosphere as high as 80 degrees. Children who slept over their impossible task were remorselessly beaten, and during the few hours off duty were often too tired to eat. *The Times* of March 17, 1823, records that a thick and punishing strap, applied to the arms and breasts of these helpless sufferers was exhibited in the House of Commons, causing a resounding report when applied to the table. Parliament, stimulated by the philanthropists of the day, finding that children were worked in the mines from five years old, dragging carts like animals in the dark, had passed a law in 1819 that no child under nine years of age should work in a factory, or for more than 12 hours a day up to the age of 16, but it was not till

1852 that this law had any general application. The official reports prove that the mines and factories were not alone to blame. Working life in the “hungry forties” took a heavy toll of helpless innocence.

“The creatures were set to work as soon as they could crawl, and their parents were the hardest task-masters.” There is some excuse for the parents. With bread at 2/- a loaf, sugar at 8/- a lb., a side of pork at 19/-, a man with 10/- a week and 8 mouths to fill, might well grasp at every $\frac{1}{4}$ d. which could contribute to a meal. There is not much chivalry to be compassed in a daily struggle for bare existence.

Nor must it be assumed that Great Britain was alone in tolerating such conditions. The authorities awakening to these horrors sent a Commission abroad to enquire into the condition of foreign labour in 1834; their report is confirmed by French writers.

The verdict of the English Commissioners was that wages in England were nearly double those paid on the Continent, that fuel and clothing were cheaper and mortality lower than elsewhere. Despite a high price for food the Englishman enjoyed a more generous diet. The French returns practically excluded fresh meat.

In 1839, Symons, one of the Commissioners, who was an expert on social questions, reported the inferiority of French housekeeping. Indeed in France the case of the children was, if possible, worse; the replies to the questionnaire of 1839 were that it was quite usual for a child

of five to be forced to contribute to the family income. The same picture is reproduced by French authorities.

In 1787 the workers of Lyon worked regularly for 18 hours a day, with only a quarter of an hour off for each meal, and 50 years later the exploitation of the workmen in the early days of the great Industrial development was not confined to Great Britain.

“Sans présenter un spectacle aussi hideux en France (as in England) le mal existait en certains lieux.”

Conditions of the Peasants of the Loire in 1809.

“Les habitations sont en général insalubres, sans autre ouverture que la porte, basses, humides. Les habitants se nourrissent de pain et de crêpes de sarrasin; au déjeûner, de pain et de beurre; au dîner, la soupe et les légumes, souvent les châtaignes; la plupart boivent de l'eau; les plus aisés consomment du poiré et du lard; au grandes fêtes seulement, le bœuf paraît sur les tables. Ils tissent eux-mêmes leurs toiles pour l'été et leurs lainages pour l'hiver. Ils ont une casaque en peau de bigue, les guîtres de toile, des sabots; ils ne portent de chapeau que l'été. Leur mobilier est très sommaire; ils couchent tous dans la même chambre.”

E. Lavasseur. *Histoire des Classes Ouvriers et de l'Industrie en France (1789-1870).*

Similar quotations might be made *ad infinitum* from other Continental writers. They confirm the conclusion that whatever the effect of the Napoleonic wars may

have been in stimulating patriotism, they had throughout Europe, under the despotic and oligarch rule of the time, the result of blunting sensibility to suffering and of visiting on the poorer classes the neglect of social problems incident to prolonged absorption in a struggle for national existence. Ignoring these obvious facts, Irish apologists charge to the malice of British Ministers a dullness which O’Connell, their own trusted leader, did nothing to dispel.

Apart from prejudice, there is no subject on which each generation appears to be so ignorant as the actions of its immediate predecessors which have not yet passed into history, but which are none the less capable of infinite misrepresentation. The Whigs of Mr. Gladstone’s time held the Tories to be the main barrier to progress; Lord Beaconsfield would have retorted that while the Whigs opened their arms wide to the middle classes who had the vote, they ignored the genuine working man’s grievances for 25 years, from Free Trade to the Reform Bill of 1867.

The *volte-face* made by Sir Robert Peel on Catholic Emancipation in 1828, seems to have been a turning-point in his outlook on the economics both of England and Ireland—and eventually the terrible years from 1840–1850 startled legislators out of their equanimity.

But even Peel, whose letters and speeches teem with new proposals for relief of distress, and who contributed munificently from his private purse to all such objects, believed with his contemporaries that Parlia-

ment could not regulate industrial life. A letter from Sir James Graham to him in 1842 condenses the whole spirit of the age into one sentence.

“A Commission is most embarrassing when it discloses the full extent of evils *for which no remedy can be provided*, as, for example, the Enquiry into the condition of the handloom weaver. I might add Lord Ashley’s investigations into the sufferings of children in factories and mines.”

This conclusion is the more remarkable as being written in a year when, throughout the Parliamentary recess, Peel was exploring every avenue for the relief of distress both in England and Ireland. Peel found salvation ten years before the close of his momentous Parliamentary life. Strangely enough his chief foe in his own party, the then neglected Disraeli, with his small “Young England” band, was his best sympathiser. But if England was not ripe for a new conception of “Social Services,” how could Ireland be expected hastily to free herself from the old ruts? The Catholics were still smarting; O’Connell was dour and disheartened; there was no consensus of parties, creeds, or classes, on any one of the great evils which beset the country.

Probably not ten men in the present Parliament at Westminster or in the Dail in Dublin realise how Peel awakened late indeed to centuries of neglect, struggled against O’Connell for a foothold, at a time when O’Connell’s agitation for Repeal was so far advanced that he was able to predict a Parliament sitting in

College Green in 1843. Hence, at the risk of recapitulating an oft-told tale, the facts must be briefly set down. The nemesis of failure has been that foresight and effort have received the punishment usually meted out to ignorance and idleness.



CHAPTER FIVE

PEEL AND O'CONNELL

"In 1840—Young England went for practical measures, Young Ireland for the shadow of Repeal. England did not understand Ireland; for the matter of that, Ireland did not understand herself."

IRELAND's real drawback before 1850 was that while the dislocation of Society was probably less than over vast tracts of the Continent, the difficulty of reconstruction was greater in proportion to the absence of a foundation on which to build. The character and habits of the population have always been abnormally divergent in Ireland. Belfast and Dublin were not more divided than Meath and Connemara. In 1840, prosperous Eastern seaports looked askance at the unenviable notoriety of Tipperary, though given a temporary paralysis of the Central power, the "road to Tipperary" would not have been as long a one from other districts in those days as it was deemed in the marching song of 1914. Before the Famine, as for 70 years after, there was no general call to representative Irishmen to unite on any practical remedy for the existing conditions. In the absence of it, political life was directed to ousting



[Anonymous]

DANIEL O'CONNELL



your antagonist and putting yourself in his place. The popular hero in Ireland then as now bespattered his opponent with abuse and threatened to drag his iniquities into light, but he did not condescend to remedies. Nor is it likely that any expert, even if he diagnosed the disease, could have prescribed remedies. The world since the Great War has been in a maze of confusion as to prices and credit. The restoration of the Gold Currency after the Napoleonic wars had great reactions. It nearly ruined the British landowners, and added to the misery of Irish cultivators by reducing prices while rents remained unaltered. Nobody on either side asked the question "quo vadis?" or could have got an answer if he had put it. If ever there was a case for a National Government, Ireland supplied it in 1820; but it would be difficult to imagine conditions less favourable for initiating such an experiment. O'Connell saw clearly that it was only by a popular call to arms that his great body of sympathisers could be kept together. He even feared the redress of grievances: "Ireland lay in torpor till roused by the cry of religious liberty. She would, I fear, relapse into apathy if liberty of conscience were soon conceded."

Similarly it was necessary to keep England in the forefront as the culprit. The landlord was now the tyrant, but ignorance could be played upon to saddle every hardship the tenant suffered on the ill will and hatred of the Saxon. The absence of any local encouragement to industry and the neglect of the poor were

kept out of sight. What was required was a new national Gospel.

If one could imagine a Round Table Conference 100 years ago convened as in the present day, with Peel as Chairman; Disraeli, Gladstone and Sir James Graham as members; O'Connell, the Catholic Hierarchs and the great Landlords round the table with a few outspoken independent Englishmen like Lord Devon, to judge sanely between extremists, the fate of Ireland would have been changed and the United States relieved of some dark passages in her history.

But this picture would precisely reverse the happenings of 1840. The Conservative Party came into power late, but possibly not too late to save the situation, had their hands been free and had they been duly supported. Peel, as Chief Secretary, knew Ireland well before Catholic Emancipation, which he had remorselessly opposed, and his *volte-face* could not wholly redeem his fame. The mischief done by 30 years of delay in Emancipation was almost irrevocable; consequently the hopeless muddle of Tithes, Grand Juries, and Municipal Corporations on which Irish prejudices were as difficult to combat as English lethargy, almost paralysed Parliament till 1841. Peel, having become Prime Minister then, devoted himself whole-heartedly to the unpromising crusade; but the gods are hard task-masters as to opportunity. The chance, once forgone, for whatever reason, rarely recurs. None of the Irish authorities came well out of the period between the Union and the

Famine, but two at least of them, the Catholic Church and O'Connell, may have been soured and deflected by prolonged disappointment. Their difficulty in working together was that "Everywhere else in Europe at this period Catholicism was identified with reaction: O'Connell in Ireland identified it with democracy;";* and this was probably as great a service as he could render to the Church and its adherents. But it was hard to put new wine into old bottles.

Throughout these years, Peel's unsympathetic manner and unyielding speech covered difficulties with his colleagues and supporters which profoundly hampered his power to relieve Irish difficulties. In any case, his chariot wheels drove heavily.

Of O'Connell himself, the arbiter of Irish destinies for a longer period than any other of his countrymen, it can only be said that it is difficult to decide "on balance whether he injured or served the country which he undoubtedly loved."† In any case, he made the task of Peel and his Government, as he would have done that of any Prime Minister, with whatever colleagues, a hopeless one.

England's distractions at home have already been noticed; the problems to be faced abroad were almost insoluble. There was war with France; there were disputed boundaries with the United States; sharp distress at home; deficit following deficit in British finances.

* Gwynn, *History of Ireland*.

† O'Connor, *History of Ireland*.

Moreover, Ireland was not her only dependent sufferer. In 1842 Scotland was in such bad case that in Paisley alone there were 17,000 people on relief, 150 bankruptcies among manufacturers; no rents paid, and the rates producing nothing. Yet in this very year O'Connell, who could scarcely be expected to wait on events, had abandoned all pretence of co-operation in stemming the calamity which was in sight, and was establishing a register of "Repealers" in every parish in Ireland.

For several fateful years something like one-third of Peel's correspondence and presumably of his time, in and out of office, notwithstanding the immense difficulties of England, Scotland and the Continent, was devoted to Ireland. If he failed, it was due, not to lack of effort, but because he was impeded at every turn. The attempt to relieve Irish poverty by a statute similar to the English Poor Law was baulked by the fact that relief was no use without work, and that what Irish labourers desired was migration to England, where they were most unwelcome, as they underbid the English labourers, whose condition was already worse than before the Napoleonic wars. The abolition of the corrupt Irish Grand Jury system was overborne because no competent body of men was available to replace it. Readiness to find money for Irish Education and adopt any reasonable system was useless; the Catholic Church would accept nothing short of the appointment and dismissal of teachers, the administration of funds, in fact,



SIR ROBERT PEEL

From the engraving by Samuel Cousins (reproduced by permission of Messrs. P. & D. Colnaghi) after the painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence



control of the whole Education of the country. After years of struggle and repeated offers, Peel wrote sadly that "the Catholic clergy were not to be conciliated and not to be co-operated with."

In 1835 the long battle had begun on Irish tithes; in 1836 the Poor Law was so drastically reviewed that Peel wrote "the utmost caution will be required to prevent the transfer bodily of the whole landed property of Ireland from its present possessors to the poor." In 1837 practically the whole Session of the British Parliament was given to Ireland: Tithes, Poor Law and Corporation Act.

In truth, if the 105 Irish representatives at Westminster had had any genuine appreciation of the real woes of their country, they would, despite the hostile temper of the British Parliament, have forced the door. As it was, even the Lords, under the Duke of Wellington's leadership, jaundiced by distrust of a population with whom each grievance when removed was only the vantage ground for a fresh one, had some excuse for their obstructive attitude. Irish measures came to them simply as palliatives which the Government were forcing through Parliament against the landlords who had to endure the sacrifices, and the contemptuous vituperation which O'Connell and his friends showered on anything short of Repeal.

Looking to what was going on simultaneously in Ireland itself, we are forced to the conclusion that it was not the loss of the Dublin Parliament, but the in-

curable propensity of Irishmen to confuse shams with realities which was responsible for the worst developments of the famine. Indeed this is the opinion of unprejudiced Irishmen. "Every step," writes O'Connor, "was taken by Irishmen to bring about, none to ward off, the inevitable famine." The instances which follow are typical of many.

As Irish labourers had no experience of trade, new industries could only flourish by importing English and Scotch experts to instruct them. Whether this was done to develope saw-mills or steam presses in Dublin, a graving dock on the Liffey, sugar-refining in Cork or glass-making in Waterford, the enterprising manufacturer and his skilled workmen were the subject of violence and outrage. O'Connell, hardly a prejudiced witness, estimated in 1838 that £500,000 in wages had been lost annually to Dublin alone by this insane policy.

Meanwhile the consumption of whisky before Father Matthew's famous crusade, when 5,000,000 people are estimated to have taken the pledge, had risen to over 12,000,000 gallons per annum, and this, despite the poverty of the population, without any attempt by their leaders to limit the notorious superfluity of public-houses and abuses of the liquor traffic.

If the Furies had concentrated on Ireland, their game could not have been better played. Cromwell laid the foundation of the worst problems by huddling together masses of people on land which could not subsist them; the landlords, Catholic or Protestant, saw no remedy

but to find a living for some of this prolific multitude by clearing out others; the Catholic Church denounced emigration to the boundless and hospitable shores of the States and Canada until the people themselves regarded it as a sentence of penal servitude. And so the miserable farce went on; the ball being tossed to and fro according to the rules of a time-worn game by which Ireland had learned to regard every ruler as an oppressor, and in which the self-interest of the Irish landed classes and the ambition of Irish politicians were served by keeping alive national prejudice and obscuring national interest.

England as the villain of the piece may in justice chronicle what was achieved in the face of all these difficulties in the 50 vital years between the Union and the Famine. The Devon Commission appointed by Peel in 1843 ought to have been as great a landmark in Irish history on the one side as the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam was on the other. Peel had already dealt with the tithes, which were urgent enough, but the reduction from £600,000 to £400,000 made them small compared to the £3,000,000 of rent—which was liable to increase at any moment.

The Devon Commission reported that 1,630,000 people were living on holdings too small for subsistence. To transport 200,000 families would cost £6,000,000. They recommended reclamation for 600,000 and emigration for the remainder. They called for a liberal expenditure of public money on these perennially dis-

tressed districts, and forestalled by 40 years the successful efforts of Balfour in the same direction. They spared neither the landlords nor the Government in their censure, and if the outspoken Drummond had been their Secretary they could not have carried out their task more whole-heartedly. Unluckily the Famine followed hard on the heels of their report, and though its main provisions were set in motion, it was too late to save 2,000,000 of the population, of whom, despite an expenditure of £7,000,000 by the British Government and £1,000,000 from private charity, roughly half died, and half left the country.

In the face of this gruesome story, the financial concessions of the British Parliament, and the legislative efforts of which Peel was the protagonist, have been consigned to oblivion. Trevelyan, however, rescued the one,* and Martin† has glorified the other. Put in a condensed form, England in 30 years before the Famine spent over £16,000,000—no inconsiderable sum in those days—on Public Works, the Poor, Relief from Tithes, Asylums and Police.

It must be recorded to the credit of British Statesmen during the same period, that beyond the belated Catholic Emancipation they established equality of commerce and currency; they reformed municipal corporations, tithes, Church rates, the prisons, the criminal code and the jury laws; they removed abuses in law

* *Irish Crisis*, page 20. Trevelyan.

† *Ireland Before and After the Union*. Martin.

courts, they established National Education, cheap County Courts, dispensaries, free hospitals and lunatic asylums; they made numerous and excellent roads, and gave great stimulus to the banking system. Moreover, up to 1846, Irish corn was admitted to England free of duty, while there was a heavy tax on foreign corn.

Such records of output are seldom read and more rarely laid to heart—but when it is remembered that they were carried in the teeth of all received tenets of Government by a scarcely solvent nation, with something like active hostility from all who were to profit by them, we can only wish that they had been printed in large type and hung up in every school-room from New York to San Francisco. Generations of Irish-born Americans whose bitterness at the sad plight of their progenitors and whose ignorance of the true facts has endured to the present day, might have been saved from much questionable interference. They would have learned that the shadow of independence has been throughout preferred to the substance of National Wealth.



CHAPTER SIX

THE ATONEMENT

“For the 50 years that preceded the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 the legislation for Ireland at Westminster, though tardy for want of clear comprehension, shows a record of State Aid and beneficent work unequalled in any country in the world.”

Rt. Hon. Sir James O’Connor,
History of Ireland, 1798-1924.

THE death of Lord Palmerston and the Household Suffrage Bill of 1867 let loose flood-gates of Reform long dammed up by the reactionary Whigs, who had exploited Great Britain for 20 years after the adoption of Free Trade. The middle classes had something like a legislative monopoly from 1831-1867, reluctantly surrendering a few crumbs from their overflowing table to the working men whose hard lot cried aloud for amendment but whose main props were Disraeli and his young coadjutors—the pioneers of Social legislation. If Ireland had fared somewhat better, the tragedy of the Famine was responsible for this invasion of doctrines then deemed orthodox. The advent of Gladstone in 1868 changed the whole face



W. E. Gladstone

THE RT. HON. W. E. GLADSTONE

From an unpublished photograph taken by Mr. Rupert
Potter in 1884. By permission of Messrs. Annan & Swan



of politics. He was a genuine political reformer, believing that free institutions, a wide franchise and education, backed by an economical and peaceful Government, would ensure prosperity.

He gallantly knocked down political barriers in Ireland, only to realise that to provide equal opportunity by law, however much it embellished his perorations, formed but flimsy material towards making a backward people prosperous. The Irish peasantry soon found that Acts of Parliament could not sufficiently penetrate the thousand tortuous windings of a poor man's destiny. Moreover, his somewhat pedantic insistence on equality of taxation during his earlier Ministerial years had, owing to the large consumption of spirits in Ireland, increased the receipts from that country by 50 per cent. during 10 years, as compared with 17 per cent. in England. He was now convinced of his error, and became, as other famous men have recently done in regard to Tariffs, the advocate of a wise discrimination.

Disraeli, with a clearer view, peered far enough into the mists of the future to see that the function of the State was not to satisfy the franchise-holders, but to relieve the unrepresented masses. It was his misfortune that during 34 years he was only in Office a few months, and had not got beyond the needs of England before he died. Meantime, Gladstone who, as Arthur Balfour pointed out in his memoirs, wielded for some years a power in England hardly inferior to that of Pitt, had sat in Cabinet after Cabinet, which, with the terrible

indictment of the Devon Commission before them, had dealt with Irish conditions after the Famine was over and after Peel was dead, as if the leaking ship could be baled with a spoon. Disraeli, in 1861, had advised the Whigs somewhat crudely to tranquillise Ireland by “feeding the poor and hanging the agitators.”

Luckily for Ireland, Gladstone (whose theories were no buttresses of adamant), having tried his prentice hand on her for 25 years before 1867, had learned with the stimulus of Fenian rebellion, that institutions do not fill empty stomachs. In consequence it may be said that in the notable five years’ administration which gave England National Education, the Ballot, Local Government and a Reformed Army, he not only laid violent hands on the two main arteries of Irish disorder, the Church and the land, but touched the fringe of the economic difficulty.

The Disestablishment of the Irish Church, the admission of the tenant to a partnership in his holding, and the institution of Land Purchase opened a new era in Ireland, and from 1870 forward it would be difficult to name any legal barrier to progress under which the Irish people suffered as compared with any country in the world.

But there were still sufficient causes of suffering to force Ireland into the limelight at short intervals. Despite the Famine 20 years before, some 1,800,000 people were still huddled together on uneconomic holdings. They had a listlessness with regard to economic

improvement which bordered on fatalism. They competed insanely for every vacant plot of land, wages were absurdly low, housing deplorable and communications poor. Nothing but desperate remedies could compensate for past neglect. Given a bad season, and those at the close of the 'seventies were abnormally bad, the competition rents which existed in nine-tenths of Ireland would be unpayable and the old tale of eviction, shootings and misery would follow in regular rotation. Gladstone's two great measures had left large gaps to be filled.

Disraeli, who followed him in 1874, after being in a minority for nearly 40 years, had arrears to meet which shunted the presumably peaceful Ireland into the background. He realised, as pointed out above, the new relations between governors and governed which must follow the great English industrial development, and even at the age of 70 he attempted to cope with them. But Eastern Europe was in throes; Wellington's dictum at Vienna "that the future danger to Europe was Prussia, and not Russia," was being rapidly realised, and he was engaged throughout his Ministry in establishing his Foreign Policy against the bitterest party opposition. Disraeli had no time for Ireland, and consequently, in the election of 1880, Irish affairs, which were to dominate Parliament for the next ten years, played no part at all. But it is noteworthy that, in his last speech to his party delivered at Bridgewater House after his defeat in 1880, he put Ireland's well-being as the foremost

objective of immediate National policy. His prescience came none too soon. Within a month of Disraeli's speech, the serried ranks of Parnellites forced a reluctant Parliament into a new campaign, from which finally emerged the Land Act of 1881, giving the Irish occupiers better terms than any farmers in the world without clearing away the land difficulty.

The British view in 1880 was a very natural one. In old days Ireland had been a danger; she was now politically necessary but economically an encumbrance. In England 560,000 yeomen peasant proprietors had been merged quietly in economic estates; in Scotland the crofters who could no longer find subsistence had been carted overseas wholesale. If Irishmen, it was held, would follow their own interests on English and Scottish lines, congestion would soon cease and prosperity follow; all true enough if not applied to a population largely uneducated, terribly priest-ridden and highly conservative in personal life.

The Western population did not want to emigrate. Reclamation was costly and far from popular, for the tendency to put off ploughing, sowing and harvesting to the last moment made all local labour unavailable in the best months of the year, and imported workers were anathema. To deal adequately with the problem the Government would have had to reclaim large tracts of land, to stimulate and supervise emigration, to move large numbers of people and to find them some shelter. Supposing these fences to be surmounted, they had still

to face a ten years' campaign on communications, housing, and the subsistence of the large classes disturbed.

The opposition of the people was perhaps the greatest difficulty to be met. The Western priests, who practically controlled the opinions of their flocks, were unanimous against their dispersal. Even in the present day the priest in most Southern parishes discourages the removal of young people to non-Catholic countries, owing to the absence of religious facilities, and, bad as the conditions of 1880 were in the West, it had not been forgotten that of 100,000 persons who hastily emigrated to Canada 30 years before, in a single year, 6,000 died on the passage and 10,000 more as soon as they reached the New World. The West of Ireland needed heroic measures in 1880 as the slums of London and Glasgow do to-day, but they had to be forced, if at all, in the teeth of popular and priestly sentiment.

Beyond all this, the Land Act of 1881, drastic as it appeared, and bitterly as the Conservatives opposed it, was not without flaws. Roughly speaking, one-third of Ireland, owing to congestion, competition and improvidence was absurdly over-rented, in many cases 50 per cent.—in some 75 per cent. reduction would have been justifiable. Probably another one-third of the holdings had been run up 30 per cent. above their value. The residue of the rents was at something like or below “Griffiths’ Valuation” made after the Famine, when

prices were 25 per cent. lower than in 1881, and could reasonably have been left untouched.

Gladstone, with a splendid flourish, appointed three Commissioners of standing—an eminent lawyer, a land agent, and a man of affairs to fix the rents. Bright, in supporting the Bill, expressed the belief that, after these pundits had settled a few typical rents, the mass would fall into line outside the Courts. These great statesmen little knew Ireland. Litigation appeals to the sporting instincts of Irishmen to an amazing degree. The tenants rushed into the Courts by tens of thousands; the Commissioners had to delegate their powers to a host of local Sub-Commissioners largely connected with farming. The equities were obscured by the Irish tendency to settle every incident in life by a bargain; no tenant could be sent empty away, no landlord could be wholly impoverished. On the best Estates, even those known as 'English managed,' where the improvements were made by the landlord, the tenants contentedly pocketed 15 or 20 per cent. reductions—in the worst some 30 per cent.—or in exceptional cases 35 per cent. was knocked off; a sum wholly inadequate to relieve the tragedy of the West.

As appeals took years to reach the overburdened Commissioners, this Act, which in principle was the greatest step forward in Irish economies since the Flood, in working left the worst evils of Ireland practically untouched.

The astute Parnell recognised his opportunity.

Genuinely moved by the sufferings of the Western tenants, he could not resist turning them to political account. Many of his party, like Timothy Healy, who, alone with Gladstone, was said really to understand the Act, would have accepted the large donative already secured and built upon it to the saving of the country. But Parnell, with 70 subservient followers, admitted no advisers. He immediately challenged the Act and tried to strangle it, instigating disorder throughout the South and West. The Act could only be saved by summary measures. Gladstone rushed into reprisals and incarcerated his political adversaries most justifiably, but with all the appearance of mediæval tyranny. M.P.s were bundled into prison without trial and his hasty Coercion Act was so drawn as even to include American subjects, and give an excuse for a dignified American protest. It also stimulated the Irish underworld in America to start a society under the name of Invincibles, to carry on a campaign of murder which almost engulfed the Irish party and obscured the Land Act in a welter of crime and repression.

In the three years of confusion which followed, Gladstone and his colleagues never had a fair chance. Probably had he first obtained power ten years earlier, he would have faced the problem more effectively. So long as Palmerston, himself an Irish landlord, lived, his dictum that "tenants' right was landlords' wrong" was an insuperable barrier; before the Reform Act of 1867 and the ballot in 1871, there was little support

from public opinion, and the majority of Irish representatives were as hostile as the landlords themselves to interference by the State.

The landlords had indeed a good case in some districts. Bad as was the lot of the Western tenants, they were—many of them—the victims of their own recklessness and improvidence. As it was, Gladstone started late; his measures and motives were ruthlessly aspersed, and his errors in other branches of policy helped to wreck his admirably intended Irish remedies. At the best, he only paved the way for the wide economic changes which under the Salisbury régime a few years later, were accepted, not merely because the Minister, who controlled both Houses of Parliament, was sympathetic, but because the complicated nature of the Irish problem was better realised.

Unfortunately for Gladstone, before the ink of the 1881 Land Act was dry he was in trouble in Egypt, S. Africa and Afghanistan. In each case what Auberon Herbert described as his “Regrets and hesitations; his funeral orations over the principles he had deserted,” and the strange medley of “democratic sentiment, Religion, Communism and Conservatism” in his speeches caused intolerable confusion in his policy. He blew hot and cold in Egypt. After coercing Arabi in the name of freedom, he abandoned the hard-fought fields in the Soudan to “Arabs struggling to be free.” He evacuated the Transvaal to the dismay of his supporters and the derision of the world. He came to the

brink of war with Russia.

Every fresh muddle thrilled the Parnellites. They worked the difficulties of the Irish position with consummate skill so as to discredit the new political gospel for which Gladstone had forced his party to make such great sacrifices. The history of 1880-1885 thereby became a lurid repetition of the age-long 4-course system of Ireland; "Outrage; Concession; Intimidation; Coercion." As a climax to the mess, Gladstone's Reform Bill of 1885 raised the voters from 200,000 to 700,000, described as the "most uninstructed multitude to be found in Western Europe"** and was carried in the face of most vehement Conservative protests, including a speech from David Plunket, which rivalled his great ancestor's achievement on "Emancipation," and was described by John Morley, no mean critic, as the most convincing piece of rhetoric ever heard in the House of Commons.

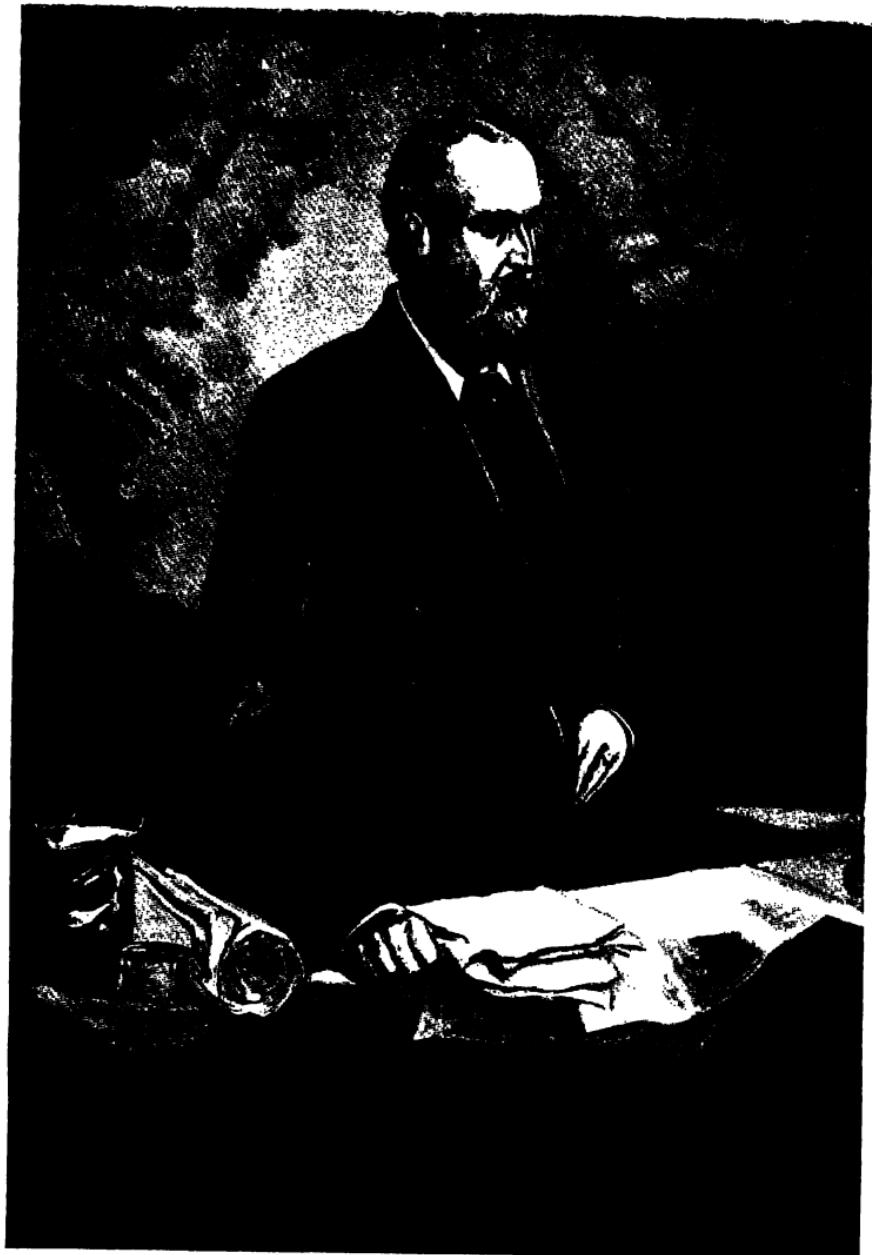
The story has been too often told to trace it again in detail. Four Chief Secretaries were thrown into the struggle in five years. The rugged Forster, the hero of the great Education Act, was driven from office after two years to conciliate Parnell; the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish followed the release of Parnell and his supporters through the "Kilmainham Treaty"; Trevelyan reasserted law and hung the Invincibles, but was broken himself by the strain, and Campbell-Bannerman played out time to 1885 under Lord

* History of the Irish Parliament, F. H. O'Donnell.

Spencer's splendid lead.

Gladstone's Irish policy, like his foreign ventures, failed, but he remained to the end unaware of the indignation and abiding distrust caused by his changes of front. The pathos of the situation was that his Land Bill, properly conceived and wisely handled, might have ranked in Irish history as the Emancipation of the Serfs does in Russian history. Instead, by 1885, America thought of Ireland as Europe thought of Poland, and Gladstone, the High Priest of Liberty, ranked as an invertebrate Czar.





CHARLES STEWART PARNELL

From an engraving by R. Taylor after a drawing by W. Wilson,
published in the *Illustrated London News*, 1889

CHAPTER SEVEN

BALFOUR

“He that overcometh.”—Rev. ii, 26.

AFTER five years of “Gladstonism and Crime” the labours of Sisyphus awaited Lord Salisbury when he formed his second Ministry in 1886. Few people would have risked money on his holding his ground a year. Eight months before he had been heavily defeated in a General Election, the newly enfranchised voters in the Counties being quite incapable of understanding such wide political issues as were involved in South Africa, Egypt and Ireland. Gladstone’s hasty conversion to Home Rule had been accelerated by the *âme damnée* of the Conservative Party, Lord Randolph Churchill, whose unquiet spirit soared through politics in the 'eighties only to be submerged after the rising of Arthur Balfour. Churchill was the stormy petrel of public life for seven years, and to appreciate the Balfour régime in Ireland it is necessary to recapitulate some of his vagaries.

The “old gang” of the Conservative Party in 1880 cut no ice with an electorate, which, after the Mid-

lothian Campaign of 1879, wanted some counterpoise to Gladstone's rhetoric. Randolph Churchill supplied it. He was equally at home with any audience; his oratory was taking and impressive, and in action he was reckless of consequences. He naturally became the idol of Conservative meetings throughout the country, and was taken so seriously by Gladstone that he became almost the protagonist of his party. One main difference between this strangely matched pair was that Gladstone, who based all action on principle, and a divine mission, had always a reservation when most precise, or, to use Labouchere's notable phrase: "He always had a card up his sleeve and tried to persuade you that the Almighty put it there." Randolph Churchill, on the other hand, regarded politics as a Stock Exchange. If certain securities promised well, you backed them, if they sagged, you discarded them.

Accordingly in the Parliament of 1880, assuming the rôle of an Orthodox Churchman, he hunted down Bradlaugh in the interest of morality and Christian Faith; within a few months he had goaded Gladstone into one tardy step after another in Egypt, simultaneously denouncing his own front bench as laggards. Every Parliamentary move was grist to his mill. As leader of the famous "Fourth Party" he debated every Bill and disputed every motion, effectively straining Parliamentary forms and securing the utmost expenditure of Parliamentary time to produce the minimum of result. Consequently, as early as 1881, Mr. Speaker

Brand, discussing the growing disorder of Parliament, said: "Of all the evils which have arisen in the House of Commons, Lord Randolph Churchill is the greatest."

Living at such high tension, his brilliant career waned and his high promise was dimmed before his fortieth year, but for seven years he made war on all House of Commons authorities as Disraeli had done 40 years earlier. After being the hero of many Parliamentary scenes and the instigator of fierce conflicts, once after he had been leader of the House, he attempted to discipline his friends. On the evening in 1893 when the fate of the Home Rule Bill was being decided by blows he made a characteristic appeal to the combatants. "You d——d fools, you are playing the devil with the Tory Party and making Hell of the House of Commons."

He had a genius for "drawing" Gladstone on Irish questions and involving him in Parliamentary difficulty. Seeing that this crusade was being carried on side by side with Parnell's organised obstruction—the most efficient which the British Parliament had ever seen—it was inevitable that these great masters of tactics should ultimately come together. Randolph Churchill, who, in 1881, had denounced Forster; in 1882 had impeached Gladstone for the base Kilmainham surrender; had vilified in turn every member and every action of the Parnellite party, and had in 1883 protested against "extending the Franchise in Ireland to illiterate rebels," boxed the compass in 1884 and

drove a bargain with Parnell for his party's vote on the Conservative protest against the desertion of Gordon, promising in return Conservative measures for Ireland "as favourable as any that the Liberal Party would give."

This nefarious compact was emphasized by a caveat against the coercive régime of Lord Spencer, who for three years as Viceroy had carried his life in his hands, and whom Randolph Churchill, without a particle of justification and to the openly expressed disgust of Conservative Irishmen, denounced from the front bench on the Maantrasna debate in July, 1885. It was in reference to this episode, in which Sir M. Hicks-Beach played a questionable part, that Parnell observed gleefully: "This is the greatest thing we have accomplished."

Lord Salisbury might well have quoted to Churchill, when he was forced to make him leader of the House of Commons a year later, the old plea of the Regent Orleans to Dubois: "Un peu de probité je vous en prie."

With such credentials, the early history of the Parliament of 1886, which was to change the face of Ireland, was not fortunate. Irish politicians had been brought in sight of Home Rule; Irish tenants had rollicked in the prospect of No Rent. Randolph Churchill, as leader, had to depend for his majority on Liberal Unionists, whom he had bitterly assailed the year before and who distrusted him to the core. Disorder of every kind was rife in Ireland, and Parnell by the

“Plan of Campaign” was receiving rents at such a rate as the tenants thought fit to pay, banking them, and withholding them from the landlords pending compliance with his behests. The Parliamentary position was rendered still darker when Churchill, who had attempted as Chancellor of the Exchequer to reduce the Fighting Services, resigned in a fit of “swelled head”; Lord Iddesleigh died and Sir M. Hicks-Beach, then Irish Secretary, was stricken with threatened blindness, the Conservatives thus losing within a few weeks the three men who had led them in the House of Commons since Lord Beaconsfield’s retirement. W. H. Smith—whose speaking power was almost negligible—was called to the helm and Arthur Balfour began his unrivalled career as Chief Secretary for Ireland.

The Session of 1887 which followed was the greatest test to which any Minister has been subjected in modern times. Parliament sat incessantly for eight months and made an average four nights a week of sitting till 2.20 a.m., with Saturday sittings to unheard of hours for many months. During practically the whole period, Irish measures were debated night after night. The parties of order and disorder fought for a supreme issue. Was English rule to be allowed to cease, even if Home Rule were not legally enacted? Balfour, stimulated by the Liberal Unionists, repaired Gladstone’s mistakes in the Land Act of 1881, opened the Land Courts to 150,000 leaseholders and reduced the already settled rents according to the fall in prices.

This was felt by the rank and file of his party to be a heavy toll paid for Liberal Unionist support, but once persuaded of the necessity, the Chief Secretary strained his influence with Conservatives in both Houses to cracking point, and carried it through. Per contra by a stringent Coercion Act, he challenged *à outrance* Boycotting, Intimidation and the Plan of Campaign. Despite unstinted Unionist support, opposition in the House of Commons, owing to inadequate closure, had to be crushed by staying power.

Parnell held the position of vantage in the struggle. Ireland, he declared, "would go to the gates of Hell for the land," and he charged the tenants to keep a firm grip of their uneconomic holdings and not allow them to be turned into large ones. So inspired, his supporters, with their new Gladstonian allies, fought with their backs to the wall. Every refinement of Parliamentary strategy, personal attack and physical exhaustion was brought to bear on the Chief Secretary, and every eviction for rent withheld from the landlords under the Plan of Campaign helped the Parliamentary deadlock. English and Scottish legislation was at a standstill. Every engine of Parliamentary torture was thus applied to the delicate and highly strung "dilettante," who had been forced to consult a specialist before accepting the post at all.

Six months of this discipline achieved everything except the subjugation of the Chief Secretary. When urged to respect the "Plan," he proclaimed it as an

illegal organisation; when impeached for justifying the police, he ordered them if attacked "not to hesitate to shoot." Imperturbable in debate, resourceful in repartee, with absolute indifference to obloquy, Arthur Balfour achieved a supreme Parliamentary triumph.

But the country did not appear to respond at the close of these notable months of struggle in September, 1887. Ireland seemed almost to have touched bottom. The whole South and West were in disorder, the Irish authorities were quaking, the constabulary were dispirited. Mr. Trevelyan, notable for his brave execution of the law, as Chief Secretary 1882-84, delivered his celebrated opinion that "the game of Law and Order was up."

For the first time a great party in the State was on the side of the Agitators. The Liberal Press was hostile, the Government organs critical. By-elections, as they occurred, were lost by the Government. The Liberal Unionists, who had made great personal sacrifices, were shaken, the Conservatives were worn out. The 300 Ministerialists, who maintained the majority by unceasing vigilance from January to September, returned to their homes jaded and dispirited; not a few —like W. H. Smith and Edward Stanhope—had their lives shortened by the strain.

But one member at least of the Ministry besides Lord Salisbury—the advocate of 20 years of firm Government—remained wholly unmoved. Arthur Balfour, when in the closing hours of the session an

unusually threatening ultimatum was launched at him across the floor of the House of Commons, sprang to his feet and said, “I would rather beg my bread from door to door than give way to such tyranny.”

This was the spirit to command support and reassure the doubting. Within a few months the nation rallied to him, but those months seemed very long.

The Duke of Wellington held that a victory vigorously pushed in the few hours after a battle was worth more than many weeks of subsequent manœuvring. “Smite the enemy on the run.” This was not Arthur Balfour’s way. It was not in his nature to alter the main principles of his life, the utmost tolerance for an adversary, the application of the velvet glove before the iron gauntlet. In September, 1887, he had won the fight in Parliament. He had now full powers. Instead of rushing over to Ireland to put them in motion, he went off quietly to North Berwick to play golf. The Nationalist organs shrieked that “Bloody Balfour” was afraid; the Unionist Press teemed with “Go back to Ireland.” After an interval, in which the Plan of Campaign remained unchecked, he went to Dublin. He proclaimed certain counties, and carried out carefully chosen evictions. Utterly indifferent to personal danger, he visited various centres of trouble. It is not too much to say that within three months he had got the complete confidence of every man in Government employ in Ireland.

He was assisted by two circumstances. The harvest

of 1887 and following years, differing from the 'seventies, was excellent. On the other hand, his opponents played into his hands. As soon as the battle was transferred to Ireland, Parnell overstepped his limits as "Uncrowned King." Choosing the Ponsonby estate at Youghal—sacred to Irish memories as the place from which Ireland saw the last of Cromwell—he delivered a spectacular summons to a landlord, who had just succeeded to an estate of nominally £6,000 a year heavily charged and with the rents largely in arrear, to choose between selling to the tenants at ten years' purchase—which would not have paid the mortgages—or having his rents taken from him under the "Plan." The landlord was powerless. A neighbouring landlord, Mr. Smith Barry, afterwards Lord Barrymore, with characteristic courage and foresight, determined to challenge this high-handed raid. With the assistance of 12 others, he paid Mr. Ponsonby double Parnell's offer within a fortnight; gave notice to all the tenants; evicted over 300, who, after they had been a charge on Parnell's funds for three years, and had been thoroughly chastened, were readmitted to their holdings at the old rents.

This victory finally shattered "the Plan," which the Pope, after a careful enquiry by Monsignor Persico, had condemned by a Papal rescript.

The civilized world to which the Separatists were always appealing began to suspect it had been hoaxed. Emissaries from America returned from Ireland with

the perplexing news that, while Balfour was launching schemes of relief in the distressed districts from the Phoenix Park, their attempts to see Parnell in London were frustrated, because even the most important members of his Party could not give them his address. In fact, for the moment the game of plunder was up. The arena was at last left clear for amending the worst conditions of Irish life.



CHAPTER EIGHT

BALFOUR

“What especially struck me in talking with Mr. Balfour was his obviously unaffected interest in Ireland as a country rather than in Ireland as a cockpit. It is the condition of Ireland, not the gabble of parties at Westminster, which is uppermost in his thoughts.”

Ireland under Coercion, 1887.
Hurlbert.

No one, unless blessed with genuine detachment of thought, could have faced the problem of “Killing Home Rule by kindness” as did Arthur Balfour in 1887, but his critical faculty enabled him to diagnose the disease and escape the pitfalls which engulfed his predecessors. So long as Arthur Balfour had a problem already dissected by experts to work on, his genius for separating the wheat from the chaff was unmatched. After resisting a principle he would often find a solution to a problem in his own way. It may, however, be argued that a certain absence of enthusiasm prevented his becoming a great leader. In this respect he was not singular. The most noted “Chiefs of the Staff” in war have often failed to command armies. Balfour, in regard to general policy, was at his best when Second-in-

Command, and his fame was probably greater in 1891 when he ceased to be Chief Secretary, than in 1905 when he ceased to be Prime Minister, 25 years before his death.

Characteristically, from the moment that his predominance in Ireland was secured, he set his own pace as to healing measures. It was not in his nature to press forward with hurried remedies like his predecessors. A man who rarely rose before 11 o'clock, desiring about two hours daily for reading and meditation, was not to be stampeded. But despite nagging and obstruction from every quarter, he was determined to press forward the material betterment of the country.

The heading to this chapter furnishes the key to the success of both the brothers Balfour in Ireland. They gave the go-by to old ruts, old divisions, and old grievances. The rival communities in the island bit their thumbs at each other like Montagues and Capulets. Ulster continued to tell the South to work and win her own salvation; the South continued to murmur "Give us Home Rule and all other things will be added to us." This fallacy could not be side-stepped by argument. By teaching the Southerners to become rich Balfour set himself to prove to them how poor a figure they were cutting. To do this a new departure in Statesmanship was needed.

His first objective was naturally the land. For centuries single ownership under the domination of the landlords had demoralized one party and pauperized

the other. Gladstone's dual ownership, with restricted rents, left the main difficulty untouched. Single ownership by the tenants was the only solution, and this was finally attained in 1903 by the advance of the whole purchase money from British sources after the way had been paved by three contributory Acts.

But this alone would have left the greater number of the 500,000 holdings in the West untouched. You cannot give reasonable subsistence to a family living in a hovel on three or four acres of wretched land, with inferior stock, by merely reducing their payments by 25 per cent. and turning the tenant into an owner after a long period of years.

Hence the State—contrary to all the economics of the Victorian age—had to come in as the “Fairy Godmother,” under the guise of Balfour’s “Congested Districts Board.” The establishment of such a body was derided and bitterly opposed by the Nationalist leaders, but in course of time, with the backing of Sir Horace Plunkett’s Agricultural Organisation Society, it revolutionised the West. The Board purchased and amalgamated the smallest holdings; imported stock; made roads and railways; drained the soil; built decent dwellings; established fisheries and Home industries, and initiated co-operative credit. By 1911, they had spent £10,000,000, and had bought 2,500,000 acres outright from the smallest tenants and sold them to more solvent neighbours. Their slogan “Business not politics” gradually wore down the abuse of the news-

papers and the sectarian prejudices which in some districts even declined to allow the milk of “Protestant” cows to be mixed in butter-making with that of their “Catholic” sisters.

In the course of a few years the Chief Secretary and Sir Horace Plunkett, who had been denounced as “Monsters in human shape,” engaged in “hellish work,” were first tolerated, then accepted and finally hailed as the saviours of rural Ireland. One thousand Co-operative Societies with an annual turnover of £2,500,000 attested the triumph of this regeneration before the close of the second Balfour régime.

Hard on the heels of this victory came the establishment of a Department of Agriculture, with a subsidy of £100,000 a year, and a mission to modernise farming throughout the country.

In these days when a British Government, whatever its political complexion, does not hesitate at a moment’s notice to establish a new department, with a staff of hundreds or even thousands, to deal with the latest political fad, it is difficult to realise what jealousy and suspicion was felt of any such departure 40 years ago, when it was still held that the taxpayer should be satisfied that the boon designed to popularize the Government of the day was one for which his income should be permanently clipped. But if the Irish Department of Agriculture came years too late it lost no time in justifying its existence. The product per acre was increased by 25 per cent., valued at the prices prevailing

before the War at £15,000,000, no mean sum when the old condemned rental of Ireland before the war was £10,000,000. No less than £124,000,000 of Irish land was sold to the tenants at annuities for 70 years, 30 per cent. to 40 per cent. below the old rentals. Irish exports are mainly agricultural. In seven years, while Imports went up from £54,000,000 to £65,000,000, the Exports rose from £49,000,000, to £65,000,000, and the total trade of Ireland in 1910 was £28 per head, as against £20 per head in Great Britain—surely an almost unique triumph for those who had 25 years before taken over a poor country bleeding almost to death. Moreover, as the best proof that these great profits had not been absorbed by those successful pioneers of Industry who are now denounced as profiteers, the fact emerged that in 20 years the Irish Savings Bank deposits had increased from £4,000,000 to £12,000,000 and the Depositors from 261,000 to 662,000.

It is worth putting on record here for the vindication of altruistic efforts by a devoted statesman and a great political party during five years, that the people affected openly tired of the interested diatribes of their representatives, and voiced the true feeling of Ireland. In 1892 the Swinford Board of Guardians, one of the poorest in the West of Ireland in Dillon's own constituency, not only passed a resolution that Balfour "had earned the thanks of all sorts and conditions of men in this portion of the country," but were compelled to "express their disapprobation of that manner of Parlia-

mentary representation which consists of standing aloof while our people are in the grip of famine, and only coming forward to interfere when it is supposed that political capital can be made out of untrue and carping criticism of the man who put bread into the mouths of the hungry."

Further, in 1894, the Irish Evicted Tenants' Association declared: "While the Tories were in power, 1886 to 1892, more practical legislation for the Irish farmers had been secured than they had ever got before."

By 1892 it is doubtful if any member of the Government had excited a higher regard among the Irish representatives than the "hated" Chief Secretary. In 1906 England was actually spending more money in Ireland than the revenue received from the country. The power of the Protestant landlords was, as Lord Salisbury said, broken by Gladstone's Church, Land and Ballot Acts. Local Government was subsequently placed under National control on a basis so democratic that it has recently been abandoned by the Free State. Indeed, 15 Corporations—including Dublin and Cork—have been suspended since 1921. The social revolution between Protestants and Catholics was complete. Every Irish subject of the King could rise from the lowest to the highest position with the single exception of the Viceroyalty.

If Ireland was to revert to her old courses after 1906 she had to find a new pabulum for her backers. Is it a matter of surprise that the Unionists took the field

B A L F O U R

against the renewed Home Rule agitation in 1910, with the firm belief that the existing Constitution was the only one which could save Ireland, and that to cut the South adrift and let her work her own salvation, in order to gratify a small body of political idealists, would impair the rising prosperity and progress of 3,000,000 people?

Let those who challenge this view compare the outlook of the South in 1910 and 1932 before they give their verdict.



CHAPTER NINE

1906-1914

“The perversity of everybody in Ireland who either writes or speaks is almost inconceivable.”

Sir George Trevelyan, 1884.

THE rout of Balfour’s Government in 1906 showed that the country was weary of Tory rule. The General Election, postponed to enable agreements with France and Japan to be brought to fruition, accentuated the divisions on Tariff, which had shattered the Unionist party. But the 20 years of Unionist Government, only interrupted 1892-5, had completely restored our relations with foreign nations—except Germany—had recast our national defences and had set Ireland at rest. Genuine Irish prosperity, indeed, touched high-water mark in 1906 and the following years. James Bryce, the incoming Chief Secretary, a noted Home Ruler, said at the outset that Ireland was more quiet than she has been for 600 years.

It would indeed be difficult to imagine a sky more cloudless than the Irish at this period. The “State of Ireland” had long disappeared from British newspapers; evictions were almost unheard of; the reduction of the Constabulary, to which Wyndham looked

as partial compensation for the large bonus given by England for Land Purchase, had begun. A number of prisons had been closed. Crime of all sorts had been largely reduced. Royal visits had been tentatively resumed with marked enthusiasm. Popular Local Government had gratified local ambition. A reasonable system had supplanted the cast-iron rule which relegated all local questions to London, by which the Dublin Corporation was forced in one case to disburse £5 a minute during the hearing of their Bill. Even the bitterness of the Nationalist Press was modified. The truth was that Home Rule guns were silent because there was no ammunition to fire, and the British Parliament was more occupied with the militant Labour Party than with the followers of Redmond.

But an unhappy incident which had occurred a few months before showed that a small amount of indiscretion might rearouse old sources of trouble. The mantle of Gerald Balfour had fallen in 1900, after five strenuous years, on George Wyndham, if the mantle of anyone could be said to fall on a being so unique. No one, unless he knew him personally, could realise the attraction of his acute intellect, illuminated by an enthusiastic and affectionate nature, and a handsome form. His career in Ireland was at once a triumph and a tragedy. To a large extent he glorified and extended the healing measures which the Balfour régime had left in operation, and inspired them by his enthusiasm born of his Irish blood.

Wyndham's Act of 1903 settled the Land Question by trusting the tenants with the whole of the purchase-money which Mr. de Valera's Government now proposes to annex. He gave much stimulus to local effort, but, as regards Home Rule, he mistook his position and was before his time. Ireland was at peace; he had no mission to rearouse the old enmity between North and South. His instinct told him that some day the pulse of Irish idealism would again beat high, and his ambition to settle the political question as he had the agrarian, let him into a sad impasse.

He had, at the instance of Lord Lansdowne, who had known Sir Anthony McDonnell in India, associated that compelling personality with himself as Under-Secretary; and by the end of 1904 he had gone a long way in negotiations which he endeavoured to take in his stride, but which were opposed to the views of all his Cabinet colleagues.

Wyndham had attained great popularity with the Irish and entered fully into the humour of Irish administration.* The country appreciated a Chief Secre-

* Description by Wyndham (page 115 of his life) of an administrative conundrum:—Casey, in Templemore, Tipperary, says he goes in fear of his life from Kennedy. Casey is given two policemen to protect him from Kennedy. They stay at Casey's house, escort him to fairs, and are fed by Casey. Coming back from the fair in the dark, Casey, with two policemen in his cart, says, "Wait awhile" and disappears over the bank of the road; for no purpose but to cut cabbages for the policemen's supper. He selects the garden of Kennedy, the man who is supposed to be terrorising him. Kennedy catches him, calls the two police, protecting Casey (from Kennedy), and tells them to arrest Casey. They do so, and resume their drive to Casey's house—minus cabbages. Casey pleads guilty. Kennedy, instead of charging the policemen with being accessories to the attempted theft, charges them with "being drunk"!

tary who could hunt all day in Meath, hurry back to the Castle for three hours of hard work, and entertain a big dinner-party later at the Lodge. But the old hands among the officials shook their heads when they heard that after such a day he would enter on a vital discussion in the small hours with Dillon or some other Separatist, whose attitude to the Irish Problem was very different from that of the brilliant Unionist who was trying to renovate the country by the shortest cuts.

In the cold light of the Cabinet, these conversations seemed, as they afterwards proved to be, sadly dangerous. Arthur Balfour as Prime Minister, convinced of Wyndham's integrity—which was unquestionable—and holding his pledge that he would commit himself to nothing without obtaining proper sanction, threw his ægis over him. Finally, when it was proposed by the Cabinet Die-hards definitely to terminate these Conversations, the Prime Minister went to the point of saying he would himself resign if his Chief Secretary were not trusted. The Opposition was thus stilled for the moment, but a few weeks later it appeared that the lines which Wyndham had intended to mark out for himself and Sir Anthony McDonnell had by no means bound those with whom he was dealing; and that there was a strong hope that Home Rule, which had been dormant for ten years, would be revived. Ulster took "fright. The House of Commons explanations were unsatisfactory, and Wyndham's resignation became inevitable.

Perhaps the saddest part of this episode, which, in view of Wyndham's early death, terminated his official career, was that his Leader, whose fine chivalry had been manifest throughout, was held quite untruly to have thrown him over and was in many quarters made the scape-goat of the whole business.

When Bryce was replaced by Birrell, an easy-going wit of great ability, but of no official experience, there was no longer a question of "killing Home Rule by kindness," but of "Resurrecting Home Rule by laxity."* Anybody who knew Ireland at all or had studied "Irish history," was aware that Ireland has kept in the centre of the picture by her strange habit of breaking all known rules politically, and exciting interest which duller peoples envy. Lord Curzon once told the writer, after a Cabinet meeting, at which different Irish views as to the probable result of the Convention of 1918 had been cited from almost every quarter, "I always knew I did not understand Ireland. I now know I never shall, and that nobody else will either." Lord Curzon had learned more of Ireland by not attempting to learn, than most statesmen by years of study.

Bryce saw clearly enough that Home Rule had been scotched, not killed, but without departing from the tenets of a lifetime he resolutely took advantage of this unlooked-for breathing space, which would enable re-

* The Irish took Birrell's measure in a very few months. "He gave an important appointment to a man whose most obvious qualifications were that 'he was a good judge of wine and furniture, spoke French and kept a canary.' Provided the applicant was a Catholic Nationalist, he ran well for any appointment under this régime!"—*Lord Justice O'Connor, II.*, 168.

forms to mature and give Ireland a chance of deciding on her destiny, which events had hitherto denied her.

If we are to attempt to trace the causes which in ten years changed Bryce's peaceful Ireland of 1906 into the shambles of 1916, there is something to be said of British short-sightedness beside Irish perversity.

England has been traditionally reckless of her dependencies. Although the most successful colonizing nation in the world, she owes her position to the enterprise of individuals, not to Governments. In emergencies she has made notable and successful conquests, but, if they have been maintained and solidified, it has been due to the man on the spot. The history of India from Warren Hastings to Dalhousie was written in Calcutta, not in Downing Street or Leadenhall Street. After the triumph of Wolfe in Canada, the country was not opened up for 100 years. South Africa, in the absence of a considered policy, was a chronic sore. Kitchener had spent five of the best years of his life as Governor of the Red Sea littoral at Suakim—probably the least attractive station in the Empire—to use his own words “Clearing away the covering of flies from my plate at every meal.” His tenacity had probably as much to do with the reconquest of the Soudan as Lord Salisbury's Ministry. As a nation, our cult of Empire, genuine as it is, has indeed been vague. It could scarcely be otherwise in a country whose boasted free institutions preoccupy Parliament with interminable discussion on political trifles in accord-

ance with the rules of the party game.

Beyond this throughout the eighteenth century we treated our Colonies as a territorial adjunct and a taxable asset, making the link with the Mother Country correspondingly brittle. In the nineteenth we believed that with complete freedom of internal action, subject to a final appeal to British law, with the prestige of Great Britain behind them and the first call on our financial and military strength, we held them by unbreakable ties.

Is it wonderful that we became careless about a country which had for a century drawn so far beyond her quota on our Parliamentary time, whose ever-recurring problems, having ousted the many needs of meritorious Scotland, had been met to the full, and whose only woes were the traditional supply kept on tap for the edification of America? We could surely sit down and allow all our beneficence to fructify.

Such, at any rate, was the attitude of Parliament in 1906. Campbell-Bannerman, in inducing Bryce to undertake Ireland, had violated an unwise tradition. Statesmen of proved capacity had fought shy of Ireland; a successful administrator in a minor post looked for promotion to a Secretaryship of State. The Irish Secretaryship may have been an enviable sinecure when it could be held in the Duke of Wellington's time by an officer commanding the Forces in Spain, but for the 50 years of reconstruction it had been an intolerable burden. The position was one of the hardest during

the Parliamentary Session. Every Nationalist M.P. had to justify his position by assailing and vilifying the Chief Secretary, and the work of administering a country from Westminster when all the Departments were situated in Dublin was doubly trying. When other Ministers went on leave, the Irish Secretary had to return to Dublin to deal with long-delayed problems, to endure hospitalities, and, to use the Irish phrase, "refresh his brogue." The wonder is that under such conditions the post, which often went begging, attracted so many men of subsequent mark.

But what was needed was not rising men, but risen men. A statesman, whose authority in his party is undoubted, gets a preference in Cabinet and Parliament which is all-important. John Redmond, in a notable speech in Belfast during the Irish Convention, pointed out that it took so long after Ireland became convinced of some necessary change to set the English Parliament in motion that the boon when given arrived too late to excite gratitude. Of the thirteen Viceroys and twenty Chief Secretaries who governed Ireland between 1868 and 1916, probably Lord Spencer, Forster, Balfour and Bryce were the only four—with the brief exception of Sir M. Hicks-Beach in 1886—who were in a position to exercise predominant influence in the Cabinet. This was of the more importance as covering the years when Ireland was the Achilles' heel of the Empire. Few of our greatest Statesmen ever visited Ireland, and most knew nothing personally of the conditions.

Gladstone was once in Ireland, Disraeli and Lord Salisbury never. The same was true of Lord Rosebery, of Asquith (till 1914, followed by his hasty and ill-timed visit to Dublin in 1916, after he had been eight years Prime Minister) and also of Lord Curzon—the greatest traveller who ever sat in a Ministry—despite the fact that he owed his seat in the House of Lords to an Irish Peerage conferred so as to keep him eligible for the Lower House on his return from India, when, having no seat in Parliament, he became a candidate for selection as a Representative Peer.

England did not give Ireland of her best in the matter of administration.

Another and most important lapse was the absence from Ireland of the Royal Family. No people is more susceptible to personal relations than the Irish. It has been said of Orientals that they would rather be misgoverned by one of themselves than be well governed by an Englishman. Irishmen reverse the scholarly *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*. They will stand a good deal from anyone they know, which they would resent from a stranger. The Dublin “corner-boy,” who, discussing the respective merits of Viceroys, after dismissing several, observed: “Give me Abercorn, who looks down his beard at you as if you were the dirt beneath his feet,” quaintly voiced the national Irish feeling.

English sovereigns up to Queen Victoria had terrible arrears of personal contact with Ireland to make up.

Lord Spencer pointed out to the great Queen that in all they had not spent a fortnight in the country since the days of the Tudors; and George IV's brief visit excited untold enthusiasm. Queen Victoria's personal inability to overcome her feeling in respect of so much disloyalty, and her discouragement of the Prince of Wales from occasional visits, added sixty years to the sense of neglect, which was barbed by the special preference shown to Scotland.

It is beyond question that the rising prosperity of the country would have been accompanied by a great wave of loyalty if, forty years ago some Royal residence, even if only occasionally occupied for sporting purposes, had been established in Ireland, and the winning personalities of the late and present sovereigns had thus been felt by Irish subjects.

The Irish landlord, who has estates in England and is necessarily an absentee for many months in a year, knows how many a difficult question which has baffled his agents can be resolved in a few days by personal contact. In Parliament the bitterest antagonists are often mollified by private relations. This atmosphere was lacking in Ireland. In a country so open to these influences they were required in the highest quarters, to secure some antidote to the poison deliberately instilled into a receptive population.

- There were special reasons why the Ireland of 1906, so free from open trouble, required careful watching, and the failure of the Chief Secretary to carry into the

towns the work his predecessors had done in the country, left a fatal gap.

The Eastern towns had taken little note of all that had been done in Munster and Connaught; results could only come to hand piecemeal. Land purchase had gone forward, but the effect of the reduced annuities was only beginning to be felt. The relief of the congested districts was necessarily slow. The grant of Local Government was a *beau geste*, but to bring contentment it required the most careful official supervision. Moreover, the disintegration of the Irish Parliament party was a grave danger. However beneficent any new proposal might be, it could never commend itself to all sections of politicians who were waging internecine war on each other. What was required was a statesman who, being convinced that material prosperity was the key-stone to Irish peace, was determined to go ahead on the Balfour lines without regard to the “whips and scorns” of any interested party.

This was not by any means the lode-star of the complacent Birrell. His idea was, not to placate the country, but to keep Nationalist politicians in good humour. A much more determined Reformer might have been deterred from further effort by the strange indifference of the Irish parties to the National interest. But the attempt to steer a course between them only produced a see-saw. A Universities Bill—a legacy from the Gladstone failure of thirty-five years earlier—was passed and secured Catholic higher education, without concili-

ating much Parliamentary support—a Council's Bill, which gave over £6,000,000 of Irish expenditure to Irish hands, was commended by Redmond, but knocked out by Dillon and Healy. The Old Age Pensions Bill relieved a mass of those whose younger relatives had migrated to America, and a further fillip was given to Land Purchase. Banks and Savings Banks reacted promptly to this stimulus.

But Dublin was left untouched. There at the centre was permanent unemployment, hopeless poverty and housing as bad as any in Europe. Twenty thousand families were living in single rooms. They were ripe for trouble. The Corporation, for many years elected by National vote, was supine. Here again, as in the Congested Districts in the West, was a case which could only be met by superior authority, oversight and expenditure. A Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary who lived in Dublin and left it untouched, had much to answer for. It is not too much to say that the state of the Capital made the insurrection of 1916 possible.

The faulty conditions of employment gave scope for the opening steps of anarchy. The attempt to secure better terms for workers, in 1911, brought on a series of strikes and a desperate struggle between employers and employed. The sore soon spread.

The Trades Union movement was at the time in the hands of James Larkin, who saw in the toilers of Ireland, so long overworked and underpaid by the smaller employers, virgin soil for his efforts.

IRELAND—DUPE OR HEROINE

With the characteristic prescience of an agitator he fastened on the services which would forward the movement best by menacing the daily life of a great city.

Accordingly by his influence the Dublin City tramway services were attacked, and a legitimate Trades Union movement was shortly changed into a National menace. The Government hovered between threats and concession. Larkin was prosecuted, committed to prison and released. A Citizen Army, the forerunner of the Irish Volunteers, was enrolled. Within three years the chief city of Ireland had endured a set-back of twenty-five years; old animosities had been revived; the Government had reawakened racial antagonism and invited the contempt which Irishmen always feel for futile rule, and there followed the strange spectacle that agitators were being sent broadcast from the centre into a country which was happy and fast growing rich, to rouse feeling for the support of the disorders in the Capital. The nemesis to England of committing Ireland to the wrong hands was indeed a heavy one. The way to the rebellion of 1916 was paved by Dublin Castle.

CHAPTER TEN

THE DEBACLE

“England’s difficulty will be Ireland’s opportunity.”

THE outbreak of the Great War found Southern Ireland again open to aspirations from which she had been temporarily weaned by wise Government and prosperity. From August, 1914, there was almost no blunder which the British Government could commit which was not thrown into the scale of agitation. The Liberal Government, having discarded its self-denying ordinance as to Home Rule, had fought the greatest battle with the House of Lords since the Reform Bill of 1832, had twice dissolved Parliament, and had tried to make good their pledges to Ireland and bring the Upper House to heel by the Parliament Act. Never had public feeling run so high in England; and in Ireland, although the old divisions of creed had been somewhat healed, the virulence of feeling between North and South had greatly increased.

It would have been impossible for the European War to come at a more untimely moment. Indeed the disunion in Ireland materially misled German diplomats as to the freedom of Great Britain to participate

in the War. Many Conservative Statesmen avoided meeting members of the Government in private houses. It happened that at a dinner-party given at the German Embassy in London in honour of the King, a few weeks before the murder of the Austrian Archduke, a prominent Ulster Conservative found himself close to two Cabinet Ministers, who were, as he believed, preparing to coerce Ulster. He took an opportunity of quietly retiring after dinner, and the Ambassador reported that conditions were so near to Civil War in Ireland, that a member of the Ulster force would not meet his opponents even in the presence of the King. Undoubtedly the strong rift between parties injuriously affected our diplomacy at this critical period.

Moreover, in Ireland there was great unrest. The attempt to settle Home Rule by the Buckingham Palace Conference had just broken down; Ulster was in arms, and the British cavalry had refused to act against the "Northern rebels." Volunteers had been raised in the South; gun-running had commenced on both sides and no one could predict to what length the trouble might go. The Government, which had strained the Constitution in England to the snapping-point to gratify the aspirations of Southern politicians, found itself powerless to proceed further, without throwing the whole island—peaceful and prosperous a few months before—into hopeless confusion.

There was worse to come, though the emergency brought out the one Nationalist who in 100 years has

seen Ireland through the clearest spectacles, John Redmond. Unlike O'Connell, who left the Irish people to their misery and banked their contributions in his ardour for Repeal; far in advance of Parnell, who was ready to "march through rapine to the disintegration of the Empire," Redmond was at the same time a patriot—a practical statesman and an Imperialist. He may not have had the supreme talent for leadership which distinguished his two greatest predecessors, but it is difficult to measure the leaders of the twentieth century by the standard of the nineteenth. Indeed, it may be doubted whether, in the present day, the multiplicity of problems presented with far greater insistence by the Press than by any political organisation, with the constant overstrain of politicians, do not impair the reserve of vision and force which is indispensable for greatness. But Redmond was essentially the man for the situation; he saw his goal clearly, and aimed not at personal distinction, but at national success.

Ireland, as he believed, must be free to work out progress on her own lines, united, because Ulster would ensure her wealth, and closely knit with the British Empire, because there was no stronger bulwark of Irish Nationality.

He was one of the few men who kept their heads when the War broke out. Although the conference between leaders of all parties, assembled by the King's influence at Buckingham Palace, had failed to come to an agreement, he had so strong a position that he could

take independent action. With the Home Rule Bill practically on the Statute Book, he generously offered the Southern Volunteers as Southern Ireland's immediate contribution to Lord Kitchener's Army. Unluckily he had yet to realise that the great soldier whose name was galvanising the whole country at the moment, knew very little of his country, and was contemptuous of politicians. Kitchener had never even seen a Territorial Battalion; he insisted on raising his own Army on fresh lines, instead of basing it on the Territorial force 200,000 strong, which had been carefully organised by his predecessors. He recked nothing of hasty levies like the Southern Irish, and possibly thought their political leanings might interfere with discipline. He accepted the Ulstermen as better material, and refused the Southerners. By this, the first of many acts of administrative high-handedness, beyond committing a grave political blunder, he sterilized some 50,000 troops to watch Ireland during the War.

Mr. Lloyd George in 1917, discussing these shortsighted proceedings, said of the War Office attitude to Redmond's proposals, that it "almost looked like malignancy." Strangely enough, within a few months, by attempting to couple Conscription with Home Rule, he himself incurred the like imputation from Southern Irishmen of all parties.

The events which led to the Rebellion of 1916 may be summarized in a few sentences. Redmond manfully endeavoured to induce the Southern Volunteers,

reckoned at 65,000, to play their part in Flanders. A large number loyally responded; the minority, estimated at some 15,000, who remained, were the nucleus of Sinn Fein, whose sympathy with Germany was indisputable. With Ulster, still regarded as a menace, there was some excuse for drilling, and the disturbing elements, besides being the centre of German intrigue, were reinforced by American gunmen, who once more, after a long holiday, found Ireland prepared for "business as usual." By the end of 1915 it was clear that some clash between these forces and the Government must result.

Here came into play the short-sightedness for which England has often had to pay a heavy price. The Chief Secretaryship was still in Birrell's hands; his eyes were only fixed on Parliamentary troubles. For eighteen months efforts had been made to open them to the subterranean agencies which were at work, to the spies who were working unheeded on inflammable material in Ireland, while in England they were being tried and summarily despatched, to the increased drilling and to the general unrest.

The Chief Secretary scoffed at his critics and despised all warnings. Interviewed three weeks before the Rebellion of 1916 by leading Southern Unionists with definite allegations, his only reply was, "I laugh at the whole thing." This light-heartedness was carried to such a point that the whole machinery for watching these dangerous movements had been scrapped by his

orders. There was not even as much information available to the Government as private political organisations had at their command, in a country which was of all others the best situated, geographically and politically, for German intrigue. The Rebellion of 1916 consequently found the Government without a policy, ignorant as to who were their friends and foes and with no resources whatever beyond the weapons of the troops.

This infirmity of purpose and bankruptcy of ideas dogged the Government throughout the five miserable years which followed. Mr. Winston Churchill, who after serving for twenty-two out of twenty-four successive years in Office can hardly be considered unprejudiced, has set forth the case with great ability, but in a manner which is astonishing from a statesman who was one of those responsible for the final surrender. The open-mindedness with which he discusses the War in Flanders prepared his readers for similar insight as to a subject on which he writes confidently, but without shouldering a jot of responsibility. He endeavours to cover up Government mistakes by generalisations on long-past National troubles, the universal unrest due to the War, and Irish ineptitude; whereas the main factor in the Irish history of 1916-1921 was the sense that the Coalition Government had no policy, that they rarely pursued the same tactics for six months together, and consequently lost the confidence of the law-abiding without conciliating the advocates of separation. It is not too much to say that the antics of Mr. Lloyd George

were the cause after 1916 of the sinister events which discredited British Administration, killed Redmond, and ruined a large number of the Southern Unionists whom they had used unsparingly in their support.

The briefest review of events after Easter Monday, 1916, shows how much the Coalition Government had to answer for. The rebellion was for a few days very dangerous; but for prompt measures taken by Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, who was in Command at Queenstown, all the South would have risen. The situation was saved by troops despatched to Cork by Lord French, then commanding in Great Britain, while the Government was still vacillating, and prompt action on the spot caused a general surrender of arms.

Asquith, to whom England owed so much in 1914, opened the ball by a blunder of the first magnitude. Having appointed General Maxwell to restore civil order and establish a military tribunal to try the gratuitous murders which darkened the Easter of 1916, he stopped the military executions and made confusion worse confounded by rushing over to Ireland, declaring Castle rule had broken down, and interviewing those responsible for the murders.

A futile effort to give Home Rule in a hurry was made later in the year and fortunately broke down; there was no concurrence as to its form in the South, or as to the principle in Ulster. Its main interest lies in its having been the first occasion when Irish policy was shaped to meet American opinion, and that it signalises

the power which the Press were beginning to exercise upon the War.

Some members of the Government, including Lloyd George, were persuaded, like Lord Northcliffe, that the Irish question would be the dominant one at the Presidential Election in America in the autumn of 1916; and that unless America were satisfied on this, a movement to refuse the export of munitions would be inevitable. They argued that Russia could not continue the war without American munitions; we must conciliate American opinion about Ireland or lose the war.

As Parliament, after the declaration of war, had postponed the operation of the Home Rule Bill till a year after peace was signed, nothing could be done except by consent. The Ulstermen and Southern Unionists were consequently called in.

Lloyd George handled the negotiations with his usual skill and resource. He obviously believed in the emergency, and as the War ranked with him far beyond any domestic question, he treated Ireland as a pawn in the game. But his efforts to force the much-tried Southern negotiators to yield were quite outdone by Lord Northcliffe. It happens to most men versed in public affairs to witness fateful incidents from time to time, but I would place high in such a category an interview to which I was summoned by Lord Northcliffe at this time. In the great journalist's view the position was so nearly desperate that, if any patriotic Englishman had weight in deciding the Irish question

on any terms there was only one course to take. His table was strewn with slips and cuttings from American papers of the most threatening character, showing that the munition question was blowing up to fever heat; the difficulty of supplying Russia, even under existing conditions, was becoming monthly greater, the expenditure of missiles being enormous. Beyond this, the French position was not far from desperate. "The man who left this room just before you came in," said Lord Northcliffe, "was an officer on Marshal Joffre's Staff: he told me Verdun may fall next week; if so, the French Government will go. Are you going to antagonise America and hamstring Russia at such a moment? Why, you may be the cause of the whole War being lost."

It need hardly be said that any Englishman would do all in his power to respond to such an appeal, but the Irish loyalists were under duress. Only a few weeks had passed since a bolt out of the blue had fallen upon them in the Easter Rebellion, and but for the personal pressure of some of their number on Mr. Asquith, which had caused the immediate despatch of troops by sea to Cork, half Ireland would have been involved.

What the Southern Unionists were asked to do was to surrender all that was most dear to them on the off-chance that it might put America into a better humour, with the strong probability that any terms arranged in Ireland would not be observed.

Knowing that the 300,000 Southerners concerned

could never be persuaded to such a sacrifice with a rope round their necks, I assured Lord Northcliffe that with the Rebellion fresh in their memories, these sorely tried men would not accept the premisses or the conclusions which were drawn from them. Rightly or wrongly, it was not a time when any settlement by agreement could take place. Speaking from the public standpoint, I urged Lord Northcliffe not to back the wrong horse, and thereby reduce his unique weight as a master of propaganda. The last words which passed are perhaps worthy of transcription from a diary kept at the time: "You have behind you," I said, "all the information from France and America, and I have neither, but may not the stress of the time have blackened their view? I can only hope you are wrong." The reply was generous: "Well, the evidence you gave before the Commission on the Rebellion, showing that you warned the Government of it beforehand, gives you a right to your opinion. I hope you are right."

Strangely enough, though the fears of both the statesman and the journalist were genuine, and the sources of their information unquestionable, the result proved that America was as little moved by Irish shootings, as she is at the present moment by the murderous condition of Chicago. Incidentally, the enormous sums which were being realised by the sale of all kinds of war material, which made America the creditor of the world, have contributed materially to a crisis which a more scrupulous political mentality would have modi-

fied. In this indecision ended the first chapter of the *débâcle*.

So much for British short-comings. We must now look at the other side of the Channel. As between the two Irelands since the colonisation of Ulster by James I, seeing that the one was Protestant and loyal, and the other Catholic and disaffected, the balance has been struck without much difficulty by English writers. But the share of Ulster in the dégrindolade of Southern Ireland from the high-water mark of 1906 cannot be passed over.

There was much excuse for Ulster's attitude. She had a century of progress behind her; while the South talked and bickered, Ulster worked and made good. While every step forward in the South had to be adjusted to the views of Catholics who were in a majority of ten to one, the Northern Protestants although outnumbering the Catholics by only three to one, had successfully maintained their majority rights. The Protestants of the North associated the Catholic religion, apart from the lurid incidents of their own past, with religious servitude and intellectual torpor. If Macaulay's review of the relative prosperity of Protestant and Catholic countries up to 1840 was accurate, they were not far wrong. There were many old sores, but, whether they were out of date or not, Ulster's anti-Catholic feeling was genuine. Orange Lodges worked the Anniversary of the Boyne, the defence of Derry, and other patriotic incidents to the one great end of keeping alive the

danger of Papal aggression. The Pope became Ulster's industrial friend. As Napoleon in the doggerel of a century earlier was the source of all mischief to England,

“Who fills the butchers' shops with big blue flies?
—Bonoparte.”*

so the Pope was the recognised bogey of Northern Ireland. Many a strike was arrested, many a hard-fought election won by this Papal craze, which was so far from being a spent force by 1920 that, as will be shown later, the Pope may be said to have won the triumph of partition for Ulster off his own bat.

Ulster paddled her own canoe so successfully that she had overcome the dilatory South in every department. Although Belfast, as a harbour, was much inferior to Dublin, her shipbuilding was unrivalled and her trade double that of Dublin. The population of Dublin increased in 100 years from 172,000 to 304,000. Meantime Belfast had risen from 25,000 to 286,000. Judged by industry, agriculture, education or public buildings, the North had completely outstripped the South. While O'Connell was trumpeting “Repeal,” and Parnell was hampering material progress for political ends, Ulster was quietly attending to business.

Unluckily, of all sciences national stocktaking is the least studied. Ulster, conscious of her own virtues, neither appreciated nor wished to recognise the gigantic

* Popular song.

strides the South had made between 1886 and 1912. Consequently it was reasonable that she should prefer to serve in the Heaven of Union rather than reign in the Hell of Separation. But geographical facts cannot be overcome by prejudices. The problem of Ulster's relation to the South of Ireland was not a whit more difficult to solve than that of Quebec to Canada, and much less so than that of the British to the Boer population of South Africa. Yet in the face of a ten to one majority against them in the South, Ulster remained obdurate against making any concession at all. In other words, if a situation arose, as it did, when for the satisfaction of the whole British Empire some degree of self-government must be conceded to Ireland, Ulster was unwilling, however amply secured she might be, to consider any terms, however favourable; in fact, she preferred to allow an unfriendly and troublesome State to be formed on her borders in an island of which she formed a part, and if it so desired go out of the British Empire altogether.

The reaction of this intransigent attitude on the South was natural. While British Statesmen who were building up the South into a prosperous community were conciliatory, Ulster was uniformly provocative. Loyal Catholics in Ulster were viewed with suspicion, reforming Protestants from the South, like Sir Horace Blunkett, with aversion. Ulster, herself unquestionably loyal, should by every law have welcomed those who by personal influence were winning the South to a

better mind, but the mere suspicion of popularity in the South was a fatal bar to an Ulster welcome. Even when in 1917, at the greatest world crisis, the Convention was called to decide the fate of Ireland, the Ulster delegates, representing 900,000 Protestants, met with closed doors, settled their policy and then invited the Southern Protestants, who represented 300,000, to give effect to it. However impeccable the North, such an attitude could not but annoy the guilty South.

Naturally, when “the trumpets blared,” the rift between the two Irelands rapidly widened. An Ulster Army had been talked about in 1885. When the third Home Rule Bill came near to its third rejection in the House of Lords, Ulster armed in earnest. Regiments were openly raised and drilled; hospital stores and all the accessories of a campaign were collected; arms were landed surreptitiously in large numbers and buried; in fact, Ulster, in a cause which she considered just and loyal, took every step which she had for centuries condemned in her Southern neighbours. The fact, that in both cases the law of the Sovereign power was being challenged did not, in the Ulster view, affect the argument. Ulster was in the right and the South in the wrong.

The intense sympathy which prevailed for Ulster in Great Britain did not in any way reduce the indignation felt by the South. It is not too much to say that in a situation in which, if any solution was to be found, good

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feeling and ready concession on both sides was indispensable, the attitude of Ulster in 1914 practically precluded an agreement. The spectre of Southern aggression haunted Ulster to the last and she got her way.

She went into the Convention in 1917, as will be seen, with stated willingness to consider reasonable terms of settlement; she did not contribute a single concrete proposal in eight months; she ended it by voting against the most advantageous and best-guarded scheme which had yet been devised to keep Ireland united. If Southern Ireland should ever become detached from the Empire, the greatest danger will be to Ulster and the responsibility for it will largely lie at Ulster's door.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE IRISH CONVENTION

“The fate of Ireland will decide the fate of the British Empire.”

Cardinal Manning, 1867.
Letter to Lord Grey.

THE attempt to settle the future of Ireland, not of the South alone, by a Convention of representative Irishmen emanated from the brain of Redmond, and the fact that it was sandwiched in between two heart-rending outbreaks of crime, and failed by the narrowest margin to achieve success, has caused it to be almost forgotten.

In 1917, Sinn Fein, under German influence, was making head among an inflammable population. Southern Ireland had all the thrill of the war, with little of the steady influence exerted on other countries by the continued tale of sacrifice. The end was not in sight, and the great body of Southerners desired nothing better than the continuance of these conditions. Redmond was therefore correct in thinking the time favourable for Irishmen to come together and make their own proposals. He recognised that the measure of Home Rule actually on the Statute Book was unsatisfying to the Nationalists and abhorrent to the Loyalists,

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and its date of application wholly uncertain owing to the War. Could not a more acceptable solution be found?

Redmond's attempt to unite all Ireland in opposition to the hereditary advocates of disruption was not the dream of an idealist. He had solid ground to build upon. Ireland was a country in which the new prosperity had reached every class. In backward countries when the national budget has been balanced, large classes are usually left discontented, however much their sufferings have been removed. The Egyptian fellah, the Indian ryot and the Russian emancipated serf, possessed of bare necessities, cannot be reasonably enthusiastic because a government has reduced imposts and spared the lash.

But in Ireland the standard of living had improved to an incalculable degree. The masses of the Southern population who in 1870 walked bare-foot, now wore good boots, the women who then wore shawls on their heads were resplendent in artificial silk stockings and appropriate headgear. The old progress to market in a tumbledown donkey-cart had been relieved by hundreds of motor-buses. Old Age Pensions had brought money into the poorest homes. The War boom was at its height. Prices of produce were unequalled. Employment was good. While English households, even of the highest, had to be content to eat margarine, the poorest Irish classes enjoyed butter. Sport of all kinds held sway. Hurley and football, hunting and bowls flourished even in country districts too remote for race

meetings.

Meantime exports had trebled, and, with these new sources of wealth, the purchase prices paid both for land and buildings between one tenant and another were phenomenal when compared with those at which the landlords had been bought out. This expenditure was concurrent with large National savings. England was spending £2,000,000 annually in Ireland, beyond the £10,000,000 raised by taxation.

Bank deposits had risen to £250,000,000 by 1920, and the South alone had £250,000,000 invested abroad, bringing in some £10,000,000 annually. The Savings Banks tell the same tale. The Dublin woman in *Punch* who replied to a crony's statement that the war was near its end, "Ah! It's always you has the bad news," concisely depicted the general Irish attitude to the war. Under these circumstances there was something more solid to weld the warring elements together than the traditional link of grievance.

Both Northern and Southern Unionists consequently deferred to the wishes of the Government and nominated representatives to the Convention; twenty-one for Ulster, ten for the South. The sixty-five remaining delegates included, among others of the most distinguished men in Ireland, four Catholic and two Protestant Prelates; many of those named were representative Nationalists, with some of the most extreme local leaders, and one or two men of recognised Sinn Fein opinions. For the first time in Irish history men of

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every class and creed met together in friendly co-operation to find a remedy for differences which other countries had found it possible to settle. Prelates, Peers, Members of Parliament of all shades of thought, sat in comity with Northern business men, Southern County Councillors, and Western men who saw Dublin for the first time. So far as their speeches and social bearing formed a guidance, all were determined on a new departure. When the Convention opened in Dublin in August, 1917, probably no more favourable outlook for a concordat had ever existed in the country. The Government, in order to create an atmosphere of conciliation, released a number of prisoners interned for the previous year's rebellion, and the ninety-six delegates met in cheerful spirits.

All parties had much to gain from peace. None the less, two at least of the parties may be said to have entered the Council Chamber in Trinity College with a rope round their necks. The old Irish Parliamentary Party, after the protracted negotiations of the past ten years, were bound to bring some form of agreed Home Rule to fruition. Failing this, their power in Southern Ireland would disappear for good.

The Southern Unionists had a still wider aim and an equal nemesis to face in case of failure. They recognised, as Redmond did, that the aspirations of an island of 4,000,000 people, situated as Ireland is, could only be realised if the whole country remained together, and that the penalty of detachment from Great Britain

would be that Ireland would subside into the rank of a third-rate power. Past injuries must be forgotten and past differences buried, if a solvent and prosperous State was to be built up at this crisis of the national history.

Had the same view been taken by Ulster, the lurid incidents of the next five years would not have stained for all time the fame of Ireland.

Despite a preliminary mistake, the Convention opened well. The Ulstermen, having passed a private resolution that no lawyer should be appointed to preside, barred one or two prominent men who would have made admirable chairmen; and in consequence the choice of a chairman, which was all-important in the regulation of proceedings for which there was no precedent, was somewhat restricted.

The question was referred to a small Committee; and within a few minutes a decision supported by the leaders of the three parties—the Nationalists, Ulster, and the Southern Unionists—was arrived at to nominate Lord Southborough, who had some Irish connection and who, after great experience of the establishment of the Union of S. Africa, had been sent over by the Government to assist. A minority of the Committee desired Sir Horace Plunkett, whose record of service to Ireland was undoubtedly and who belonged to no political party. The opposition to Plunkett was deep-seated and genuine. He was talented, resourceful and courteous, but with many merits, he was known to be a bad chairman and

held his own views too strongly to have a really judicial mind. His enthusiastic supporters, however, were determined, on the ground of his great services to Ireland, to fight to the bitter end for his appointment even if it split the Convention, a proceeding which would have marred all harmony at the outset. On this ground the three leaders and the majority reluctantly gave way, and they had occasion to rue it.

There were two views of procedure. The one which brought Redmond and the Southern Unionists together was that the Convention should sit *de die in diem* five days a week; grapple with the salient points in Parliamentary fashion, and try in six weeks or two months by consultation and concession to arrive at heads of agreement.

The alternative, which was favoured by Plunkett, and adopted at his instance, was to have some weeks of set speaking as a preliminary so that the whole field might be surveyed, hoping that some grounds of accommodation might emerge.

The natural result was that, while the great majority of the Convention felt bound to contribute to a feast of oratory so dear to the Irish character, the whole métier of the Convention was changed. With a long vista before them, the business men pleaded for sittings only in the middle days of the week, and, having Government facilities for travel, the delegates went to the end of Ireland for several days weekly. The atmosphere of conciliation which pervaded the proceedings at the out-

set was, in consequence, rapidly dissipated. The Southerners were weekly exhorted by their extreme supporters to make no concessions; the Northerners "not to play Lundy."

After two months of the Plunkett preliminaries, with visits to Belfast and Cork, the Convention had not advanced a step and therefore delegated the task of preparing a scheme to twenty-one of its members, of whom the chairman was not one.

The visit to Cork had been of bad omen for what was to come. Redmond, a Leinster man, made a happy speech indicating his pleasure at meeting his Southern supporters. Two days later, after the Convention had attended a ceremony in Cork Harbour, he was mobbed by a hostile crowd and only saved from violence by the fact that friends and foes alike among his Convention colleagues made a cordon round him. One of his colleagues also escaped a closer acquaintance with the harbour by a narrow margin. Nevertheless after much speechifying and feasting the Convention left for Dublin with the applause of a vast gathering at the railway station. "It is impossible that some settlement should not come out of this," said an English bystander as they left. "You don't know Ireland," was the chastening reply.

As soon as Committee work began in October, 1917, and alternative schemes were considered, the leaders of parties came together privately. Sir Edward Carson had not joined the Convention, but always patriotic, his in-

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fluence exerted from outside was for pacification—in his own words: “I must risk any popularity I have won in Ulster to obtain a settlement.” Dr. Crozier, the Protestant Primate of all Ireland, was equally earnest. Redmond at a somewhat later stage, when he saw that the Southern Unionists meant to press their proposals for compromise at all hazards, definitely asked if he could rely on them to join a Government and keep out Sinn Fein. On receiving specific assurances, he expressed his readiness and that of his colleagues to serve under Carson in a Coalition Ministry. At the close of 1917 every omen was favourable.

But an Ulster Catholic farmer, as early as October, 1917, foretold the difficulty which became paramount in March, 1918. Being told a settlement was near, he remarked sagely: “Whenever we get near a settlement in Ireland a mist seems to come over the land. Can it be that the mist can proceed from the Catholic Church?”

The warning was not forgotten—the Catholic Prelates were consulted very early in the day. After the Committee had had many sittings and the Convention had been four months in existence, the Southern Unionists, in November, 1917, put forward a definite proposal which brought the Convention to an issue.

The Ulster leader, without committing himself, had stipulated for forty Ulster members in a Lower House of 100 if an All Ireland Parliament was established. This was agreed to; there was a strong Second Chamber and all Irish services except Customs, which neither

England nor Ulster would concede, were to be under Irish control. Land Purchase was to be completed on equitable terms. The new Irish Parliament was to function in Dublin, but Ulster was to be largely administered from Belfast.

The scheme was greeted with a sigh of relief from all sides, and after a fortnight's more consideration the Convention was ripe to vote on it.

But here the "Plunkett Custom" came athwart the proposal—a stickler for forms, the chairman declared that, till certain Committees had reported, the Convention should not come to a vote. The delay of three weeks gave the opportunity for the inveterate Irish habit of bargaining to amend the terms. The Customs suddenly became a fetish. The leader of the Catholic Prelates was Dr. O'Donnell, Bishop of Raphoe—who was believed to keep Cardinal Logue's political conscience. He commenced a subterranean warfare against the surrender of the Customs, alleging that Donegal peasants were oppressed by the British rates. Needless to say, as Ireland would have her own revenues, they could be otherwise relieved, though it is remarkable that with the fullest power the Irish Customs in 1928 were as high as in 1918.

Foiled on this line, the Bishop interviewed several of Redmond's supporters and instilled doubts into them of Lloyd George's reliability. "If," said he, "the Government do not carry out the Convention proposals, you will be saddled for ever with the odium of the con-

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cessions you have made to obtain a settlement.” Redmond saw the danger at once and endeavoured to stem the rot. Not a moment was lost in obtaining a written pledge from Lloyd George countersigned by Curzon, the leader of the House of Lords, that if the Convention agreed upon the proposals by a substantial majority, they would be passed through the British Parliament within two months, whether Ulster voted for them or not. The Bishop of Raphoe was obdurate. “Either include the Customs, or we vote to withdraw all the concessions made to obtain a settlement.” Disaster followed disaster. At this crisis Redmond died in a London nursing home. When the news reached the Convention, which had assembled after a fortnight’s adjournment to take the vital vote, a proposal was at once made, as is usual at Westminster, when a great statesman dies, to adjourn for the day. The Nationalists pressed that no business be done till after the funeral. Ten days’ more delay.

A further mishap. The funeral at Westminster Cathedral, attended by politicians of all classes and conducted by the English Cardinal, was a tribute worthy of a crowned head. To the consternation of everyone it was found that, when the coffin reached Dublin en route for Wexford, the Irish Ecclesiastics were not prepared to pay similar honour to this faithful Churchman and loyal patriot. To this day no explanation has been forthcoming, but reading between the lines, it was clear that the Catholic Church could not be counted

upon for any settlement inspired by Redmond.

The climax came a few days later. Bishop O'Donnell came into the open as a wrecker. After a heated scene in the Convention, in which the Bishop's tactics were exposed, Dillon, who was not a member, and whose distrust of his Unionist opponents was well known, made a vigorous attempt to get Redmond's followers to vote unanimously for the Southern Unionist proposals which brought all Ireland together. He said his party could never govern the country without such safeguards.

When the division was taken, after nine months of deliberation, the result was foregone. Three months before there were only two known dissentients out of ninety-six, the vote of the twenty-one Ulstermen being, according to the definite statement of their leader, uncertain, but certainly not adverse. Now the figures cast were: for the settlement, forty-seven; against, forty-one. The Catholic Bishops—with the honourable exception of the Bishop of Ross, who besides his clerical prominence was a trained statistician—voted against a settlement, and the Ulster twenty-one, combining with the men they most distrusted in Ireland, assisted in a body at the wreckage.

The Convention, so divided, had brought Ireland back to the old impasse. The Catholic Church had once more proved itself the strongest element in Ireland and Rome shortly after rewarded Bishop O'Donnell, the chief actor, with the Archbishopric of Armagh and a Cardinal's hat.

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So ingloriously in April, 1918, the Star of Irish Unity waned and the Sun of the old National Party set for ever.



CHAPTER TWELVE

IRELAND AND ROME

"Whoever knowing what Italy and Scotland are, and what 400 years ago they actually were, compares the country round Rome with the country round Edinburgh, will be able to form some judgment of Papal domination.

"Whoever passes in Germany from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant principality, in Switzerland from a Roman Catholic to Protestant Canton, in Ireland from a Roman Catholic to Protestant County, finds that he has passed from a lower to a higher grade of civilisation."

Lord Macaulay, History, Vol. I.

No cinema with all the resources of modern science could produce more soul-stirring pictures than Lord Macaulay has done by the pen alone. His estimates of individuals have been frequently challenged; his conclusions as to political or spiritual forces must equally be taken "cum grano." But there is a substratum of incontestable truth in his generalization, quoted above, as to the gap between a narrow spirituality and the wide demands of temporal sovereignty. When the material world is overshadowed by the spiritual, mundane interests must, of necessity, slacken.

The most devoted Catholic would hardly select the

priesthood as a training ground for high politics. The Church of Rome can probably claim for her Ministers a higher level of personal subordination and sacrifice than any other religious body. But these very qualities are the result of a discipline so severe and a self-renunciation so complete that it tends to stunt individuality. The budding neophyte in Protestant schools is brought up with other boys, enjoys the same liberty, plays the same games, and revels in all the buoyancy of youth without reproach. Not so the aspirant to the Jesuit Order, or to the priesthood. From his earliest days his companions are restricted to those of his own faith. In a Jesuit Seminary, as in the recognised training schools of the Church, he is practically shut off from outside influences. Such establishments naturally differ widely according to local custom and the character of the Principal. But in nine cases out of ten the youth in training for the spiritual life must surrender himself wholly to control.

Secular Education has notably changed in the last fifty years. By the old tenets all boys were forced into the same groove; the routine of study was consecutive; Latin, Greek, or Mathematics were administered in the same doses without regard to the aptitude or tastes of the learner. Indeed if a boy showed a talent for history, it was held wise to reduce the pace in that direction and press forward geography in which he was weak. Modern teaching is more broad-minded. Subject to the rudiments which all must acquire, scholars

of both sexes are encouraged to develop on the lines which most appeal to them. A dead level is useless in this generation; it is admittedly best for the young to hitch their wagon to a star.

In the Catholic Church the only star is the Spiritual Star. This is to be attained by discipline and self-abnegation; training is largely confined by these traditions. In most Catholic Seminaries every hour of the neophyte is settled for him; his hours of devotion, work and exercise are rigidly laid down; meditation is compulsory; mental and physical limitations are ignored. Above all, the pride engendered by criticism and independent thought must be exorcised. Indeed one who had passed through every stage of training for the Jesuit Order has borne witness, that on the day of his ordination he was refused his Director's blessing because—despite a sheet officially clean—he was suspected of holding views of his own on points of Ecclesiastical discipline. It is not for a layman to decide whether such iron bonds conduce to spiritual sanctity; it is quite clear that they do not train the mind to meet the wider problems of public life.

In the case of Ireland the disabilities induced by the recognised training for ordination have been increased by local circumstances. The Cathedral on the Rock of Cashel, with its gems of architecture, is said to be the work of men trained to religion in France, where, in the twelfth century, building among other necessary services formed part of the recognised training in

some monasteries. The same necessity does not now exist. The Irish peasant or small shopkeeper has often the ambition to devote a son to the priesthood, and there is no necessity for him to go farther from his home than Maynooth. His fellow-students are to a great extent of his own class; it would not be too much to say that nine-tenths of the candidates for the Irish priesthood go through their rigorous training without "outside air" of any description. Yet these are the men who, in emergencies which have recurred through untold years, have to be counted on in their appointed sphere for wise thought and action, and are judged hardly for failure. Even in the smallest Irish parish a shortage of crops, an outbreak of disease, an untoward crime makes a sudden call on an obscure priest for action which brings a flood of light on himself and his Church.

It would ill become any Irish layman to minimise the devotion of the mass of Irish priests. In straitened circumstances themselves, with a meagre outlook, sadly bereft of intellectual society, surrounded by poverty which they can seldom relieve, they have still laboured to teach those around them to "hunger and thirst after righteousness." But the circumstances of a religious body without general endowments and dependent almost exclusively upon the contributions of each congregation create inevitable pitfalls.

The Priest in each Parish must be maintained by his dues; each Parish must also make a contribution to the

Bishop. In every religious denomination the popularity and success of a Minister is to some extent weighed by the support which his influence can command. It is inevitable that the same should be the case in Ireland; a successful priest can dispense hospitality and give a lead which is not lost on his equals or his superiors. Advance in the Diocese is dependent on the influence of the Bishop: and if the Bishop dies, his successor is nominated, subject to approval at Rome, by the whole body of priests in the Diocese. The most high-minded and spiritual priest may in these circumstances be passed over for a more worldly-wise colleague. It is to be feared that the wrong name sometimes finds its way to Rome. In any case, this system of selection has produced strange inequalities.

No doubt it will be urged that the procedure in the Protestant Church of unfettered presentation to a living as a right of property by a layman who may not even be a communicant is an anomaly, and that the appointment of Bishops by the Crown on the recommendation of a Prime Minister of whatever religious faith is questionable. In theory this may be true; in practice, Prime Ministers have almost invariably sought guidance from the Archbishops on the spiritual side; and in other respects the man in power on the spot must be a better guide than the Pontiff at 1,000 miles' distance. Obviously the right of English Bishops to a seat in the House of Lords forces consideration of the qualities which tell in statesmanship.

If Irish priests could have been paid by Endowment instead of by their flocks; if the Bishops could have been altogether independent of their clergy, and given a voice in national questions, as was proposed in the Convention of 1918, the advantage would have been great, nor can it be imagined that their spiritual force or due subordination to the rules of the Catholic Church would have been diminished. In this respect the divorce of the Church from State support has done both parties immeasurable harm.

Outsiders complain that throughout Irish history there has been no cohesion of authority, and no conciliatory action by any party. Obviously when Popes were questioning the temporal authority of the Tudors and Stuarts, apart from the legitimacy of Queen Elizabeth, which no Catholic could acknowledge, compromise between such combatants was impossible. Till Catholic Emancipation was conceded, any agreement could only be skin-deep. Indeed, up to 1796 a Catholic Bishop on his Consecration took an oath "Hereticos persequar et impugnabo." But even if Sovereigns and Ecclesiastics made the path difficult, many who are now alive and many who held sway within living memory share the ignominy of failure.

It is hard to assign responsibility. Consider the course of the last 100 years. Before the Union, Pitt had proposed the Endowment of the Catholic Church with due provision for the clergy, provided some voice was conceded to the Government in the election of

Bishops. Lord Castlereagh stated in the House of Commons that the proposal with its conditions was assented to by the Bishops. Subsequently, no doubt under pressure from above, the Irish Bishops declined any concession which involved any sort of control. "Let the servants of the Crown be content with the patronage they had."*

Peel later stepped into the gap. In 1845 he proposed to Parliament to vote £100,000 to build non-sectarian Colleges at Cork, Galway, and Belfast with £30,000 a year endowment. The Bill passed, despite many Catholic anathemas. In 1851, the Catholic Bishops in Synod condemned the "Queen's Colleges" and drew away most of the students. It is noteworthy that in 1932 the Archbishop of Dublin issued an ukase seriously condemning any parents who should send their sons to Trinity College.

Higher Education, under any State management, has been vetoed by the Church; national Education has shared the same fate; nothing but complete surrender would meet the clerical demand.

Gladstone's first period of office, 1868-74, might well have been a turning-point in Irish Ecclesiastical history. The disestablishment of the Irish Church removed the chief symbol of Protestant ascendancy. The endowment of Maynooth promised equality. Simultaneously came a glimmer of hope from Rome. Pope Pius IX held a unique position in the Western World. His

* O'Connell. Speech to the Catholic Board.

character and long service as Pontiff gave special force to his pronouncements. He took the bull by the horns. In 1757 a body of representative Irish Catholics, lay and clerical, had drawn up a declaration "abjuring, disavowing, condemning the opinion that the Pope or Council or any other ecclesiastical power whatever can absolve the subjects of this kingdom or any of them from their allegiance to His Majesty King George." No response was forthcoming from Rome, but in 1827 the Rector of the English College in Rome wrote:

"Rome would never approve but only tolerate the Oath which English Catholics take at present."

For many years no step was taken from Rome to counter the allegation that a man could not be a good Catholic and a good subject to a Protestant sovereign at the same time. This had been the great barrier to Catholic Emancipation, and it should have been the first concern of ecclesiastical statesmanship to remove it.

At last, in 1871, Pius IX made the following declaration: "There are many errors regarding infallibility, but the most malicious of all is that which would include in the doctrine the right of deposing sovereigns and declaring the people free from their duty of allegiance."

It appeared as if a new era were opening in which the Church and State would confine themselves to their proper functions, and equality between Catholics and Protestants would be finally secured.

In 1878 State Aid was given to intermediate education; the Seminaries controlled by priests cost only between £30 and £50 a year in fees; the admirable Schools conducted by the Christian Brothers rose from 4,000 pupils to 12,000.

The stimulus given to the Catholic Church by twenty years of British remedial legislation was remarkable. In 1861, with 4½ millions of population, Ireland had 6,000 priests and "religious"; in 1911, with 3¾ millions of population the "religious" exceeded 15,000. Meantime, with the relief from excessive rents the substitution of fine places of worship for miserable hovels became the main feature of rural Ireland. These happy developments had their influence at Rome. In 1887, when Ireland was torn asunder by the Land War, Archbishops Walsh and Croke threw themselves on the side of the illegal combination to withdraw all rent and paralyse the Land Acts; the Pope, stimulated by Cardinal Manning, after an enquiry by Monsignor Persico, issued a Papal rescript, upholding voluntary contracts and the Land Courts, denouncing boycotting and the intimidation by which the tenants' monies were being collected. It is not too much to say that this grave interposition restored confidence, and opened the way to those further developments of Balfour's policy which added £15,000,000 a year to the profits of the Irish farmers.

Unfortunately the "Court of Appeal" of 1887 was rarely open. The Irish Hierarchy resumed sway. The

priesthood, no longer recruited from young men with wider education than that of Maynooth became increasingly insular. There were no Mannings in the Irish Church. The Statisticians of the Vatican were not supplied with the returns which would have shown them that by every basis of calculation the progress of Catholic Ireland under a Protestant sovereign had for fifty years exceeded that of any other similar community in the world. On the other hand, Spain, France and Austria, degenerating in their Catholicism, threw into brighter light so loyal a body of Catholics as the Southern Irish clamouring for independence by a loud-voiced minority. It is to be feared that the Vatican had a meagre "Intelligence Department."

As an instance, in August, 1914, a Catholic Bishop of English birth was astonished to find at the Vatican that they imagined Britain to be half-hearted in the War because she could only send 150,000 men to France. His reply that as a Naval power with a voluntary army Britain was putting forward all her strength was regarded as apologetic. Similarly, six years later Bishop O'Donnell's plea that his flock would be too heavily taxed if he did not scotch the all-Ireland settlement was accepted without demur, and he was rewarded for a result which has shaken the influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland for all time.

John Redmond's pacific efforts, viewed in the light of the treatment meted out to him in 1918, left

the impression that in respect of Home Rule there were still in the Catholic Hierarchy men like those who felt that “Emancipation had its drawbacks, as troubled waters were best to fish in.”

In truth, as regards Irish Government, it has been difficult for many years past to trace a consecutive policy in the Church of Rome. By 1921 the spiritual position of the Church had been long safeguarded; with equal franchise and predominating numbers complete Catholic control had been secured in all local affairs; even the Viceroyalty was open to a Catholic. The people had marvellously prospered. The moral and spiritual ground on which the Church could acquiesce in a disturbance of such harmony is a mystery.

The splendid enthusiasm and devotion evoked throughout the Free State by the recent Eucharistic Congress is surely a good omen for a better understanding among all Catholics of whatever views or nationality.

On the other hand Protestants who hold that religion is the strongest buttress of civil Government, and that freedom on matters of faith is the best adjunct to progress, should feel as to the Catholic Church with the warring ecclesiastics of old:

“Let us shake hands over the narrow gulf which divides us.”

The Irish Convention of 1918, which so narrowly missed uniting the whole country, North and South, against lawless extremists, unanimously voted, at the instance of the Southern Protestants, that four Catholic

Bishops should sit as permanent representatives of the Church, in a Senate of sixty. Since the Treaty of 1921 appointments to the Senate of Ireland have been practically under the control of the leaders of the Dail. Not one prelate of the Church of Rome has been included at a period when the social and material needs of the country have required the experience and sympathy which the Ministers of the predominating Faith can best supply.

Time alone can tell whether this regrettable loss of influence will be permanent.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

IRELAND AND AMERICA

“Flagrant selfishness is not only unlovely in private life, but prejudicial in politics.”

Bismarck.

THERE is no chapter in the history of the United States which is so damaging, and yet at the same time so justifiable from the American standpoint as the relations of the Republic with Ireland. The States have claimed for 150 years to be a law to themselves. Physical detachment has made them impervious to the liabilities and restraints of foreign politics. The first tenet in their religion is that the nation is a free and unfettered unit, irresponsible as regards other nations. With these views, having under their four years' system less continuity of Government than other States, their spasmodic incursions into questions of world interest have not been always wise or consistent.

But throughout this period there has been until the last few years one abiding influence which has governed Republicans and Democrats, financiers and farmers, Eastern and Western States alike—namely, the distrust of their old master and sometime foe, Great Britain. This underlying spring of action has, needless to say,

formed an unbreakable link between the United States and Ireland. Originally the result of mutual antipathy to England, it has been cemented by the constant stream of immigrants from Irish shores — eager to contrast American comfort with Irish poverty. Even if the condition of Ireland had been defensible, no nation could have absorbed hundreds of thousands of tattered and starving people — far beyond the capacity of their ports — without being profoundly influenced by their woes.

The stage was well set for the Irish exhibit. The ordinary American cultivates but a spasmodic interest in his own politics. So long as his country is in the middle of the road, he takes little heed of who may be in the ditch. This fact must be kept in mind to account for the gap which exists between the British and American people, the one having politics and social life in the same Capital, the other being so completely separate that the parliamentary life of Washington and the business and social life of New York have nothing in common. Hence, while the most ungrudging hospitality is shown to English visitors, and personal friendships between Englishmen and Americans exist by the thousand, the language used in Congress is invariably critical and often tinged with suspicion. "There is more political indifference in the United States than in any other of the larger nations. The interests of the people are left to the fitful play of individual ambition, temper, prejudice and humour."*

* Dr. Murray Butler, "Looking Forward."

This detachment fitted in well with the qualities of the invading race. The Irishman was quite ready to fill the gap. He is a brilliant exponent of his own woes, and if he has had lapses from fortune, he always has in reserve some maleficent genius who is responsible for them. Once transplanted from the atmosphere of self-pity and placed in a new environment, he often comes to the front—but, in his unregenerate days, he leaves little to the imagination. The Englishman, according to a professional calculation, gets on with a vocabulary of 500 words as compared with the Irishman's 5,000. Possibly with half the vocabulary and double the thought many Irish troubles might have been solved. The tales of the sinister 'forties influenced American politics for fifty years. Reforms, land measures and expenditure by England on a scale unparalleled in Great Britain were never heard of in America. Indeed, the conviction of British tyranny and Irish suffering was so deep-rooted that impartial Americans who came over to study Irish conditions after the War were astonished to find that 1920 was as remote from 1850 as the "four-day boat" in which they had crossed the Atlantic was from the *Mayflower*.

This must be the excuse for the mistaken judgment formed by America, and for the many breaches of international comity which resulted from it.

The whole problem was simple enough in American eyes. Here were 4,000,000 to 5,000,000 people, reduced by famine and straitened resources from

8,000,000, living under an alien rule, only needing the yoke removed to be as prosperous as other agricultural peoples. The Government of backward nations against their will does not commend itself to the New World. We have never had any good marks in that quarter for the century of work which turned India, "the greatest Bear-garden in the world," into a fairly prosperous country. Possibly if after a brief skirmish Ireland, like Scotland, could have been exhibited as a finished article, England would have achieved merit, but after hundreds of years of struggle the end seemed far distant. Hence while British statesmen were labouring manfully to blot out the past, every advance was made against the damaging machine-gun fire of prejudiced individual Americans, ultimately reinforced by the heavy artillery of the Federal authorities. It is noteworthy that beyond the sums so generously remitted by Irish immigrants to their needy relatives in the old country, the remittances for agitation, collected by organisations hostile to the English Government, ranged from £50,000 to £100,000 for years together.

The Irish had much to lose from the vendetta; the American-Irish nothing. Household suffrage in 1867 first gave the tenants power. Their Parliamentary representatives under Isaac Butt concentrated on freeing the land; he was knocked out by the Fenian plot hatched in America. Parnell's determination to rescue the wretched victims of bad law and worse seasons was dominated in 1879 by £70,000 voted him from America

on a “last link” programme. Again in 1882, when Parnell had held up the whole Government in Ireland and was wielding power single-handed, he was undercut by the “Invincibles”—a gang of murderers paid and organised in America.

The same story recurs again and again throughout the years of remedial measures. In 1886 the assault of Henry George on the Mayoralty of New York and Davitt’s plan of campaign—which proved the bane of the Irish tenants—were run in harness. If the flame showed any symptom of flickering it was fanned by Patrick Ford’s publication the *Irish World*. From 1867 to as late as 1923, this deplorable periodical spat venom and incitements to crime in England without protest in any American quarter. Even in “God’s Own Country” such toleration is remarkable.

In 1875 Patrick Ford inaugurated through the *Irish World* a “Skirmishing Fund” to equip Irishmen who would set London on fire in fifty places at once. In 1880, he claimed the glory of having patented dynamite in the cause. In the subscription lists figured such items as “Five dollars for bread and twenty for lead,” and this at a time when it rained outrages in Ireland.

In the London *Times* of March, 1887, it was shown that the movement to drive the English Government out of Ireland after the rejection of the first Home Rule Bill was “planned by Fenian Brains, founded on a Fenian Loan, and reared by Fenian Hands.” The informer, Carey, on whose testimony the Phoenix Park

murderers of 1882 were brought to the scaffold, was run down by his American associates, despite change of name and a journey of thousands of miles, and paid the penalty. Patrick Ford, the immediate cause of scores of murders, was dealing with more scrupulous foes. To "hire assassins to assassinate assassins" is not within the canons of British procedure. Hence in 1923 he was still "on the walk." Ireland had then obtained terms which America had waged the greatest Civil War in history to avoid giving to the South. But the last link had not been severed. The intrepid Cosgrave, with other Irish Ministers, who had run all the risks of the rebellion, was holding the fort against extremists who were burning public buildings, looting banks and sniping helpless individuals.

The *Irish World* feared that the interest of the Irish working-classes in America might slacken. It accordingly issued in January, 1923, a cartoon depicting Cosgrave, T. M. Healy and Mulcahy in a butcher's shop with dripping knives, with the legend: "By Royal Appointment. Successors to Maxwell, Macready, Greenwood, Churchill and Co. Several more prime young Irishmen killed. British orders receive our prompt attention."

Under such incentives within a few months these American agents killed and wounded twenty-two unarmed British sailors in Queenstown. Despite every effort no one was ever made accountable for this crime. So great was the revulsion of feeling that half a score of

Roman Catholic Bishops in this year, in their set charges, deplored the lawlessness and immorality which had been imported into Ireland by these cut-throats, with effects on Irishmen and girls “which the most frenzied imagination could never have painted.”

Did the American Government deliberately shut its eyes to these excesses by its citizens and their possible repercussions? When the British Government, in 1881, locked up American citizens of Irish birth as suspects, these persons clamoured successfully for the intervention of the American Government to protect them against being dealt with as Irishmen and British subjects. Men, *per contra*, who had abjured British allegiance, were absolute foreigners in Ireland with no more legal right to interfere with British Government there than with that of the Czar in Poland.

But the American President, if he had left the suspects to their fate would have had to answer to Congress. Throughout this period the State legislatures had passed resolutions advocating Home Rule for Ireland and Separation from the British Empire; Members of both Houses of Congress had taken the lead in similar ebullitions; the American Government tacitly acquiesced in these incitements to disorder, and on no single occasion dissociated the public servants of the Republic from this orgy of criminal effort.

Indeed as years went on, the tension of the Great War made American statesmen more reckless in their attitude.

From the moment in 1916, when England's difficulty became intense, even the pretence of neutrality was abandoned. In 1916, Lord Grey, in a notable letter, had to call the President's Representative, Colonel House's, attention to the action of the Senate, which had passed a resolution regarding the treatment of Irish prisoners after the rebellion. "Why," wrote Lord Grey,* "if humanity is their motive, do they ignore the real outrages in Belgium and massacres of Armenians? These latter were outrageous and unprovoked, whereas the only unprovoked thing in recent Irish affairs was the rising itself, which for a few days was a formidable danger."

It is worth remembering in this connection that Lord Sackville, when British Ambassador at Washington, received his passports from President Cleveland for having emphasized, in reply to a letter addressed to him, his happy relations with the Government to which he was accredited. The Senate had no passports to receive, except those for re-election by its Irish Constituents.

In 1918, three Americans, Messrs. Walsh, Dunne, and Ryan, with some sort of encouragement from President Wilson himself, persuaded Mr. Lloyd George to sanction their visiting Ireland, where, under the name of the "American Commission on Irish Independence representing 20,000,000 of people," they visited a number of towns, made reckless speeches,

* The Intimate Papers of Col. House, Boston, 1926. Vol. II, p. 318.

advocated an Irish Republic, and on one or two occasions lauded the Easter-week Rebellion in 1916.

It was perhaps fortunate for them that at the moment the Government of Ireland was in the hands, not of a Statesman, but of a distinguished Field-Marshal, who hesitated to act contrary to the orders of the Prime Minister, whom he regarded as his superior officer. Messrs. Walsh and Co. would have got short shrift from politicians of experience like Lord Spencer or Lord FitzAlan.

But the climax of American interference was reached between December, 1918, and September, 1919, when the Committees on Foreign Affairs of the United States Senate and House of Representatives sat and examined a number of witnesses on the rights of Ireland in connection with the Peace Conference. The Committees received and officially printed vast masses of documents, containing garbled history, going back to the Tudors, bitter attacks on individuals living and dead, and fantastic reports of existing Irish conditions. Where can we find a parallel for such conduct? British and American forces had just made prodigious sacrifices side by side; the Prime Minister of the one and President of the other were then co-operating at the most critical moment in the history of the world. The principle of hearing a case against a friendly Government was questionable enough; the official publication of highly disputable statements was surely beyond justification. The American Government could disown the *New York*

World, but it could hardly say of Congress Records: "No child of mine."

The governing objection to the whole procedure adopted is that the Senate and the House of Representatives threw their ægis over the enquiry with such men as Senator Lodge and Mr. Flood in the Chair, and, even if all the prejudiced and mendacious statements about Great Britain are eliminated, the damaging references to American policy and undertakings which were put in evidence were published officially without protest or correction.

The following are a few examples:

"When we entered the war and when our co-belligerents accepted our aid, when our declaration of principles was made for the purpose of winning the war, upon those grounds our aid was then accepted. Then the words of our President were accepted, at least tacitly, by the world, and the aid we gave and the help we sent in men, money, and in munitions justify us in insisting that his declarations be now applied in their entirety."*

"When America entered the war the Irish-born here felt that President Wilson had made holy again the Allied cause, had made the Irish issue once more an inalienable part of the international aspect of all national issues.†"

* Statement of Mr. John A. Murphy, of Buffalo, N.Y.

† William J. M. A. Malony, M.D.

“There is one tested standard and only one by which the Allied cause may be judged, a standard by which every principle President Wilson has enunciated may be measured, a standard by which the present may be weighed with the past and the future may be estimated, the standard of Ireland.”*

“We point out the importance of Ireland in any scheme that would practically bring about the freedom of the sea. We say, again in no spirit of hostility to England at all, but only taking conditions into account as they exist, that England cannot continue to be the dominant power of the earth; that England cannot continue to control the world unless she controls the sea, and that her continued control of the sea is dependent upon her continued control of Ireland; and we say that she can make no better contribution to the general freedom of the world, she can give no better evidence of her desire to make a just and durable and permanent peace, than by consenting to the disarmament of this fleet, which now is so very much larger than the fleet of any other nation or practically any combination of nations.†

“While it is true that England made last year \$225,000,000 out of the control of Ireland, the real secret for insisting upon keeping her control of Ireland is that she wants to be able to control the

* William J. M. A. Malony, M.D.

† Statement of Judge Colahan.

seas. She can do that because of the geographical position of Ireland only if she conquers Ireland.”*

Judge Colahan had not stopped short at giving evidence, and his activities on the German side during the war must have been perfectly well known to the American Government.

The following is the transcript of a document which fell into the hands of the Irish Executive.

“New York,

“17 April, 1916.

To H. E. Count Bernstorff.

“*Judge Colahan requests transmission of the following remarks:*

“Revolution in Ireland can only be successful with the support of Germany. This should consist principally of aerial attacks on England and a division of the Fleet simultaneously with Irish Revolution. Then if possible a landing of troops, guns and ammunition in Ireland and possibly some officers from Zeppelins. This would enable the Irish ports to be closed to England and the establishment of stations for submarines on the Irish coast and the cutting off of the food supply from England. The services of the revolution may therefore decide the war.

“He asks that a telegram to this effect may be sent to Berlin.”

* Statement of Judge Colahan.

Political Prisoners in Animal Cages

“To prove that the prisoners in Mountjoy Prison were exhibited in cages ordinarily used for wild animals, we will produce photographs of the cages unless they have been removed, in which event we will produce at least fifty prisoners who occupied them and a countless number of impartial witnesses who saw them.”*

Victims Rendered Insane

“We will produce the records of the gaols and insane asylums, as well as the victims who have recovered, and the relatives of those who have not, to prove our charges that numbers of Irish republicans were rendered insane by their treatment.”*

These astonishing statements were backed by demands that the American representatives at the Peace Conference should insist on the appointment of a Committee of Seven, none of whom should be citizens of Great Britain, to inquire into all the circumstances of the Dublin Rising of 1916, the exhibition of political prisoners in wild-beast cages, the atrocious treatment by which prisoners were rendered insane, and the like.

Long accounts were admitted by the Committee of interviews with President Wilson at Paris, and verbatim replies attributed to the President were published with-

* Statement of Mr. Frank P. Walsh.

out apparently any authority from him or any confirmation.

Citations might be given *ad infinitum* to prove the offensive nature of this propaganda—which runs to some hundreds of pages, relieved only by an occasional outburst at the hardihood of those who challenged the right of the United States to take up any internal question relating to a foreign country, or a heated reference to the profanity of some cartoonist in Ireland “who had portrayed America with dollar marks all over Uncle Sam’s clothes!”

Under the circumstances the letter by which Lord Grey conveyed to Mr. Page in measured language the feelings of the British Government with regard to the Senate’s Resolution in 1916 might well have been repeated more forcibly in 1920. It is surely intolerable that any friendly nation should circulate in official documents gross libels upon another.

What would have been felt if the British Parliament had taken this opportunity to hear and publish to the world a highly coloured version of the Negro Question in the South, or to organise buccaneering ventures to defeat Prohibition? The attitude of mind which tolerated these proceedings is bewildering. The Puritan idea of Hell was that it was a place where everyone would have to mind his own business. It is a long cry back to the Pilgrim Fathers, but their mentality does not appear to have wholly evaporated.

When the question of interference is raised, American

writers not unnaturally recur to Mr. Gladstone's serious lapse during the Civil War. Just as a few years later he attacked Turkey and Austria, under the belief that he might assist oppressed Nationalities, so, when the Civil War broke out, being full of admiration of Mr. Jefferson Davis, the President of the Southern Confederacy, he so far outstripped the bounds of diplomatic propriety as to assert that "Mr. Jefferson Davis had created not only an army and navy, but a nation." This grave indiscretion, though hastily countered by another Cabinet Minister, Sir George Cornwall Lewis, under Lord Palmerston's orders, raised the temper of the North to red heat. Two generations have not wiped out the remembrance of this blunder. Meantime Great Britain has surely purged the mistake by ignoring much "tail-twisting" from the New World.

One great service done gratuitously by Great Britain to America has been constantly ignored. In 1823 President Monroe, at the instance of John Quincy Adams, enunciated his celebrated warning: "Hands off America, North and South." Of this challenge to the world, Senator Lodge wrote in 1920 to an English friend:

It was not an altruistic doctrine, and the insincere altruism to which our President has lately treated the world was not so fashionable then as now.

The Monroe pronouncement certainly was not altruistic. The best which could be said for it was that it rested primarily on the law of "self-preservation."

Indeed the doctrine has been subject to strange reactions.

Professor Hiram Bingham tersely summarised a few of these.

“In 1895 we declare that we are practically sovereign on the Continent; in 1898 we take a rich American island from a European power; in 1903 we go through the form of preventing a S. American Republic from subduing a revolution in a distant province; and eventually take a strip of that province because we believe we owe it to the world to bring about the Panama Canal.”

However we may view the Monroe Doctrine, the validity of it lay in the hands of the British Fleet, and nowhere else. Yet from 1823 to 1920 Great Britain preserved a scrupulously correct attitude not without severe pressure, and some danger to her own interests. When Germany, with her rapidly expanding population of 70,000,000, restricted territory, and a negligible fleet, was seeking “a place in the sun,” the support of Great Britain was insistently sought to secure her necessary expansion in S. America. India and the East were to be amply guaranteed as the price of British complaisance in the West. The rejection of these overtures governed the relations of Germany and Great Britain from 1901-1914, and caused the great increase of the German Fleet.

From the European standpoint, the fears of the “United States” as to aggression from South America

were remote. Distance and local conditions made the peril almost negligible. Nor had the States any ground of past conquest or special interests, on which to support their demand for a monopoly. Yet, a people so sensitive to possible aggression from ports or bases thousands of miles removed from them in South America did not apply their logic to the Irish problem. If an adjoining continent must be so carefully safeguarded, what about an island studded with excellent harbours within a few miles of her neighbour, and a sure source of danger in case of war? These considerations had caused Great Britain to maintain her Sovereignty over Ireland for 500 years; the United States had no such link with South America. This correlation of facts deserves more thought than it has received.

The British, more than any other people, acknowledge the far-reaching power of the United States and its potential good in the hegemony of mankind. The long spell of British police action, so beneficial to Asia and Africa, is drawing to a close, but the influence of great peace-loving nations, if combined, can do a great deal without incurring the sacrifices which England has made in Egypt and Mesopotamia. For the future of the world it is to be hoped that American intervention will not be fitful, as in the past. It is not enough, as a high American authority recently explained, to account for such vagaries by saying that “complacency and self-satisfaction, coupled with too little knowledge, take high rank among our National assets.”

Alexander Hamilton held that the recently freed Colonies were first drawn to attend Congress by trade necessities; possibly a similar compulsion may bind America more closely to Europe in the future. It will be a notable day for the world when America takes her rightful place in the Council of Nations; speaking through her representatives not the personal opinion of a President, who may be disowned, but the fiat of a Continent.

For good or ill in Ireland, it may be presumed that the last American shot has been fired. After the Treaty of 1921, the writer, when visiting Washington, was invited to an interview by President Harding, during the worst phase of Irish destruction, and was asked to explain the burning of public buildings and houses, and other extraordinary proceedings which had followed this notable Irish victory. He suggested that from time immemorial in Ireland the peak of one demand, when attained, merely disclosed a fresh one, and that Great Britain, in conceding what the United States had felt bound to refuse to the South, had apparently made the sacrifice so long called for in vain. The ruler of 120,000,000 people rejoined "The truth is we have been wrong about the whole question all along."

It is not impossible that in coming years the internal problems which beset America may give England the opportunity of showing the reserve becoming to a friendly people in the case of excesses which she has never tolerated within her own borders.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ST. PATRICK OR DE VALERA

“When Ireland was in 1921 handed over to the Irish, the English handed over a country in which more had been done, and done successfully for the people by State action than in any country on the face of the globe. A peaceable revolution had been accomplished.”

Lord Justice O’Connor.

“What Ireland lacks is humility.”

Pope Benedict XV.

OUR quest is nearly over. The past of Ireland has been briefly sketched; the future is on the knees of the gods. We have lived into an age when there is apparently no finality. In the eighteenth century wars led to more wars, and political lessons were never learned, especially by those who sat in the seats of the mighty.

It had always been so. Charles I suffered death, but his immediate successors learned little from his experience. England for more than a century swayed between Puritanism and libertinism, between penury and extravagance, between the foibles of Monarchs and the corruption of Parliament. National stability made no progress. If possible the lessons to be learned from

the Continent were still more discouraging. The exhaustion following Napoleon's wars had the strange effect of stabilizing all the countries except the chief culprit, who was also the greatest sufferer.

The Battle of Waterloo opened a new era. From that time to the present great efforts in the field or the Senate have been compensated by long periods of peace. Europe rested for forty years from 1815. Prussia fought three wars, and having secured the supreme position in Germany after 1870, enjoyed a corresponding respite. Lord Beaconsfield's "Balkan Frontier" of 1877 was similarly respected. The final European clash was brought about by rulers whose autocracy had been built up during several generations.

Civil progress, so far as the British Empire is concerned, followed the same lines. Classes and masses settled their industrial differences in England without a set-back; Scotland went from poverty to wealth unmoved during the same period; Canada and Australia meantime grew to maturity in fullest cohesion with the Mother country. The same was true of legislation. Since the first Reform Bill, an Act of Parliament once passed has stood like the Rock of Ages; even Mr. Gladstone's astounding output in the Parliament of 1868 has become sacrosanct. British Statesmanship has consequently become a synonym for ordered progress. Is Ireland alone to be the victim of the instability of centuries?

Surely the lurid days of the struggle from which

the Treaty resulted should dispose every actor in it to deprecate such a climax. Let us think back to 1921. Of all wars Civil War is admittedly the ugliest. At the time when murders, burnings and terrorism were raging in the South, the King, in opening the Parliament at Belfast, made a striking appeal for peace. Mr. de Valera in response invited leading members of other Irish parties to meet him at Dublin Mansion House to consider what reply should be sent. No eye witness can ever forget the thousands assembled in the street during that memorable Conference, who, through long July days, were supplicating the Almighty on their knees for the cessation of these horrors; and no one, whether Unionist or Separatist, who responded to Mr. de Valera's call would have entered the Conference except with the hope of finally ending the contest. Ulster was not represented, as Lord Craigavon, then Sir James Craig, declined to serve; but four Southern Unionists under pressure from the Prime Minister unwillingly agreed to meet the insurgent leaders. Apart from their love of Ireland and their earnest desire to close the chapter of terrorism, they had nothing to gain and much to risk. They had fought determinedly at the Convention four years earlier for a united Ireland and had been frustrated by Ulster. They had again and again, when consulted by the British Government, advised them to act firmly or make terms. The Government had done neither the one nor the other.

Life in Ireland in 1921 was no more secure for

persons from the highest to the lowest than it is in the underworld in Chicago to-day. Murders may not have reached the high average of certain American cities, but no one knew where the next blow would fall. Men with a foot in both camps had warned the Unionist leaders that nothing short of closing the railways and the post-office, through which all Government information filtered, and putting the whole country under martial law, would enable the ringleaders to be arrested and the rebellion to be crushed.

The British Government, who had won the war on the Continent, were being outwitted at every turn in Ireland. Not a single raid by the organized troops had been successful for many months; the number of rebels captured *flagrante delicto* was negligible; scores of British officers had been sacrificed. The troops were tired out, and, if fighting was to continue, the Military Authorities were insisting on reliefs being sent. It is doubtful whether the ruthless methods which command success in a Civil War could now be employed in any country. The absence of them in Ireland had made the struggle onesided. If the authorities keep to the rules of war; no stabbing in the dark; no refusal of quarter; no maltreatment of non-combatants, they can hardly hope to crush a mobile enemy striking at will in any quarter at any time and under no restrictions.

Soldiers who had commands in Ireland in these trying days gave a very different estimate of the position

after the truce was signed from that based on their reports forwarded to headquarters during the preceding weeks.

The rebellion could no doubt have been crushed but it would have involved sending another 50,000 men from England with an appalling increase of suffering to the people.

The highest authorities estimated that resistance to the law had increased by 400 per cent. in twelve months. It was quite clear that unless the whole country was to be ruined, there must be a drastic change in one direction or the other.

The Unionists consequently came to Mr. de Valera's Conference with a definite policy, which they had already pressed on the Government. In either event those whose lives and avocations were at stake would suffer heavily; whatever the result, it was certain that the blame for concessions to stop the struggle or for the misery of its continuance, would be visited on the negotiators. They "have taken their lives in their hands," said Archbishop Bernard, preaching in Westminster Abbey, "and their reputations, which are worth more to them than life." They had left the Government in no doubt of their views. If Great Britain meant to continue the contest *& outrage*, let the Government say what terms they proposed to give after they had won. Alternatives were many. The pre-war Home Rule Bill was in evidence; the Dublin Convention settlement bound all concerned in it to an Irish Parliament; a new

Constitution for Ireland had since been passed in London. To return to the status quo ante was a chimera present only to the minds of backwoodsmen who had learned nothing in ten years. Short of establishing such a peace as there was once in Warsaw, any British Government must give such a form of Home Rule as would at least make good recent offers. The Prime Minister was urged to put his cards on the table.

South Africa provided a valid and recent precedent. Early in 1902, when the Boer War had been carried on for two and a half years and there were 300,000 British troops in the country, Lord Kitchener pressed the Home Government most strongly not to continue the fight till every Boer had surrendered, but to call their leaders to a conference and tell them the utmost terms the British Government could offer. The Cabinet of the day approved this proposal, although it by no means commended itself to the High Commissioner, Lord Milner, and the Conference of Vereeniging followed. The Boer leaders, duly convoked, having heard the terms which gave their people all possible freedom of legislation, schools and language subject to incorporation with the British Empire, expressed their inability to consent, returned to their lines and after thirty-six hours the war was renewed. Within a few weeks, the Boers voluntarily surrendered, and the same terms were granted. This procedure by 1921 had ensured peace in S. Africa for nearly twenty years. Could the Empire have been served by any British subjects more loyally

than by General Botha and General Smuts during the European War?

Braced by the recollection of Lord Kitchener's successful effort, the four Unionist delegates set themselves to persuade the Irish leaders to a new Vereenging. Here was the whole difficulty. Throughout long days of discussion Mr. de Valera strenuously declined considering any terms short of complete surrender by the British Government. At the end his spirit was unbroken, but the weak points in his armour were indubitable. His forces were exhausted, and unlike those of the British, no reserves were available; more than one of his ablest leaders was in prison under sentence of death; the "Black and Tans" were creating widespread alarm by imitating the ruthless tactics of the revolutionary troops. To continue burning houses and assassinating individuals would benefit Ireland little if the Government were prepared to sacrifice everything for complete victory.

In the Dublin Conference both sides had therefore something to fear and much to lose; but, as the hours ran out, the obvious desire of the delegates for a fair settlement and the moving aspect of the crowds to whom peace was a necessity apparently wore down Mr. de Valera's opposition and he agreed to send delegates to London, provided that the truce, which the Officer Commanding the British forces pressed as indispensable, was immediately established. It was interesting that the Coalition Government, which knew neither how to

sustain War nor make Peace, refused a truce in the first instance, thinking it possible to negotiate while Dublin itself was being made a shambles.

The sequel is well known. It was equally unfair to Mr. de Valera and the Unionist delegates. To both parties expedition seemed the only security for agreement. Not one of the Cabinet Ministers who dealt with Mr. de Valera's representatives was in touch with Ireland, nor was Irish opinion, except that of the North, invited. Ministers were urged again and again to strike while the iron was hot and while recent memories gave a clear vision of the future; for no one is more sensitive to weakness than an Irishman. The opposite course was pursued. Mr. Lloyd George's measure was taken at the outset; it seemed quite clear to the Revolutionary Leaders that he would fight no more. Mr. de Valera had very properly named three weeks as the limit for which the contending forces could be kept in hand. His representatives reached London in July; the negotiations continued for four months. If Sir James Craig had not insisted that some decision should be made before the Ulster Parliament opened, they might have run on indefinitely. This "still strong man in a vacant land" prevailed. On the night of December 5th a crisis was made; by a *coup de théâtre*, "War in three days" was threatened by Mr. Lloyd George—Mr. Griffiths and his colleagues were brought to a decision; the Treaty was signed. The terms fell only short of complete separation. Ulster obtained all she asked; the 300,000

Protestants of the South were left in the lurch, every pledge given to those who had made the Conference possible was broken; even the completion of land purchase, desired by all parties, was left untouched; and the interests of unrepresented minorities were added to the embarrassment of Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Cosgrave.

The wavering tactics and the long delay of the Cabinet had excited expectations in Ireland, which exposed the signatories of the Treaty to obloquy and personal danger, while the sentiments of the minority were conveyed to the Prime Minister in a few hours in unmistakable terms.

One of Rider Haggard's most telling historical novels depicts in moving words the feelings of his countrymen who had made their lives in South Africa and loved the country, when all that rendered life attractive to an Englishman was taken from him after Majuba Hill. The Southern Irish Unionist classes December 5th, 1921, which separates him from the North, with that surrender of which Lord Cairns said in relation to South Africa:—

“For all the ills we ever bore,
We grieved, we sighed, we wept;
We never blushed before.”*

In these days when the whole future of India is being held up by consideration whether the Moslem minority might be subjected to the Hindu majority, it is difficult

* Discourse concerning the Government of Oliver Cromwell.

to realise that the Southern Irishman who lived his life in a place endeared to him by the associations of centuries, who mixed with his neighbours, whether rich or poor, in all the happy Irish intimacy, found himself in the same rank with a villa resident at Monte Carlo. He could take no part in the Dail because in nine cases out of ten those who won the victory had a natural right to the seats. He was similarly debarred from Local Government. He might have unique experience, but he could not use it for his own people. Even as regards land, it was impossible that he should not suffer. All classes of holdings, whether accommodation land near towns, lands in hand, and even demesnes have in fact been taken compulsorily at fifteen years' purchase by an assembly which could hardly fail to back the wants of the many, rather than what had hitherto been regarded as the rights of the few. Mr. Griffiths, on the day after the Treaty was signed, truly observed with regard to the land not already purchased:

“They should have taken this burden off us before the settlement.”

It is to be feared that many of those, who might have become the most valued citizens of the Free State, left the country rather than remain subject to such disabilities.

These inevitable repercussions from a decision hastily made on the principle that any terms were better than no terms, robbed the Treaty of the healing properties which would have been its main justification. In con-

sequence the penalties which await the man who does even the right thing in the wrong way fell upon the Government, which shortly afterwards came to its end, having barbed the saying that “England does not love Coalitions.” Poor Ireland was left to suffer avoidable calamities; indeed the aftermath of those fateful months of vacillation is still with her.

The announcement of the Truce in July 1921 had been accompanied by great National thanksgiving; and had the terms conceded in December been immediately granted, there would have been a sigh of relief. Even among an optimistic people like the Irish it is realised that the victor cannot impose his whole will on the vanquished; still less the weaker party, at a critical moment of its fortunes, on the stronger.

One might say more. In July, not only in Dublin, but in remoter parts of Ireland, a settlement which condoned all rebellion, released all prisoners and imposed no penalties would have been welcomed. The material demands of Irish patriots for generations past had been conceded. All Irish services, Land, Finance and Legislation were by the Treaty renounced by Great Britain. The Dail now has paramount power in the Free State. A separate language, however unremunerative, is taught compulsorily in the schools; there is an Irish coinage, an Irish flag, supreme Irish law. The autonomy granted has been enjoyed without any sort of interference by Great Britain. Indeed, so far as Parliament and the Press are an index of British

feeling, there appears to be complete relief in the detachment of the Imperial Parliament from Irish problems.

Why then in 1921 as in 1932 has the overthrow of the old order not promoted peace or contentment in Ireland?

Do the events of the years 1921 to 1923, among the blackest in Irish history, represent the idealism of individuals or the considered policy of a nation? Many rulers have essayed to govern Ireland with power, but without purpose. Mr. de Valera has purpose: has he the power to force idealism to a supreme issue?

In 1922, without fresh provocation, the extremists fell upon the negotiators, their comrades-in-arms in the struggle, who had not merely released Ireland for the future, but started her free from a share of National Debt, which on any basis of computation must have reached £400,000,000. The Republicans destroyed Irish property amounting to £40,000,000 in two years after 1921, and succeeded in setting back the whole trade and development of the country. Collins, despite a ruthless record, died in the field; Griffiths of a broken heart; O'Higgins later on by a cold-blooded assassination.

When the new rebellion was stamped out, Ireland enjoyed a period of reconstruction in which sound finance was established, corrupt municipalities were suppressed, an impetus was given to education, excellent roads were made and an efficient police under the name

of Civic Guards was established. Land purchase was completed compulsorily on terms which, in view of the composition of the Dail, pressed heavily on the landlords who had thus additional grounds for leaving a country in which they had neither political power or representation. None the less, the achievements of the new rulers of Ireland, with so small a Parliamentary majority, were remarkable.

But the peace was only a pause. By 1930 a new era of crime caused Mr. Cosgrave's Government to pass a Coercion Act remarkable for stringency even in Irish annals. Within a few months the votes cast for Mr. de Valera at the election of 1932 have enabled him to open the prison doors and give fresh scope to those whom his predecessor had branded as sworn disturbers of the peace.

What is to be the end of this unhappy story? On one side, the Free State has attained the assured position of a Dominion within the greatest Empire on the globe, under the protection of the British combination, and with securities for trade which she cannot otherwise obtain. On the other, she is invited to make herself an outcast, with a population of 3,000,000 nearly exclusively agricultural, sharing an island with unsympathetic neighbours. It is to be feared that Ulster and the Free State are further apart to-day than at any time in history.

The new creed which the Free State is to embrace, instead of increasing her wealth, would antagonise the

customer with whom she does 90 per cent. of her trade, drive away persons of independent income, and make her internal resources dependent on excessive tariffs, which have been fatal to greater powers. The Free State, as was the case in the eighteenth century, has no coal, no minerals, no ship-building and few manufactures. Revenge, even if practicable, does not spell prosperity, and peevishness as to the past is poorly harnessed with arrogance as to the future.

The present rulers of Ireland must decide whether they mean to reject prosperity from immoderate pride of race.

One thing is certain. The world is tiring of these eternal shifts and changes. Justin McCarthy complained that there "was something fitful in Irish agitation; it is wrought up to a certain temperature, and if at that boiling-point nothing is done, the heat goes out." We have now to face the reverse of the picture. Agitation has secured what was beyond hope and perhaps wisdom, but the heat breaks out afresh.

The protest of the Irish penitent who assured her confessor that "her good deeds were such that the Almighty was heavily in her debt," typifies the attitude of Irishmen to their rulers and of Ireland to the world, but a people who have no oversea Government to blame, no oppressive landlords, no taxes except of their own imposition, and have complete immunity from past liabilities and present control, will be judged by hard facts without much sympathy.

Ideals will not obscure facts.

Since 1920 not one small nation has made such an advance as Ireland; any impartial judge would surely attribute her economic improvement to her British connection. She emerged with booming trade from the Great War, and out of twenty-one nations was the only one without a farthing of debt. Lean years notoriously follow fat years, and the trial of Ireland's strength to stand by herself is yet to come.

Again, the powerful moral and financial support of America, available during all her past struggles, will hardly be forthcoming. No necessity is felt for the one, and a nation in such deep water as America will have little of the other to spare for some years to come. With the whole world in throes, nations are finding party Government too costly a luxury to be maintained, and have scant sympathy for divisions based on far-fetched grievances.

Ten years ago it was easy to excite feeling to release the one recalcitrant member of the world-wide association of States under voluntary bond of Great Britain; now, the question of whether a bare majority, if majority there be, of a State, which is troubled by not a single British soldier or civilian, should cast off the tie of sovereignty, has scarcely an academic interest.

But it would appear that all these advances must be scrapped, the roots of progress must be pulled up, the lurid past must be revived, so that a policy may be carried through in Ireland in 1932 which has brought

such powerful combinations as the United States and the German Empire to the brink of ruin.

Has not the Irish people, so long-suffering and so scarred by centuries, earned a respite from the prescriptions of warring physicians? Tolerance has grown up between Irishmen of different classes, creeds and ambitions; need it be replaced by fresh animosities and by battling forces with the legacy of renewed hate?

When the men of 1916, the old fighting Nationalists, and even the former Unionists have tried to obliterate divisions from common love of country, cannot the most recent of all Irish combinations display a similar generosity? Must those founders of the Free State who sat by her cradle be compelled to follow her hearse?

This year has seen the 1500th anniversary of St. Patrick who has been something more than the Patron Saint of Ireland. His life was a long struggle to compromise those warring elements so dear to primitive peoples: perhaps the most difficult rôle for any man to play, and one still unfulfilled in modern Ireland. If ever a nation had a guiding star, St. Patrick supplied it. The one aim of his life was by precept and example to utilise every good thing which he found existing, and so cause Christianity to adapt itself to all that was not repugnant to its beliefs.

Would that the Saint could now look back on the 1500-years-long vista of Irish conflict, judge between combatants and assess on the highest lines the heroes and the oppressors of Irish story. Kildare, feared by the

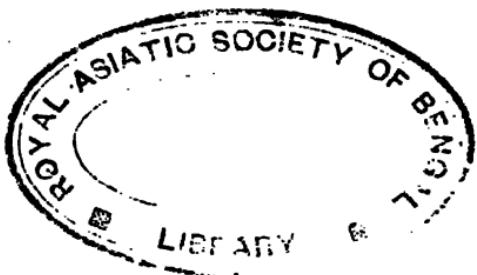
Tudor; Strafford and Cromwell, unlamented men of wrath; Grattan, who gained under the Union which he deplored a resting-place in Westminster Abbey; O'Connell and Parnell, single-handed Governors of the country; Peel, Gladstone, Balfour, defamed in their lives, but in death not far removed from Irish hearts.

Of these outstanding figures in Irish history, the uncompromising advocates of National greatness have been canonised and those who built up National prosperity have been aspersed. Surely, when weighed by St. Patrick's test, the palm will rest with those who showed the truest love of the Irish people. By this standard the first will be last and the last first.

“Some day a great Irishman will stand upon the Hill of Tara and make faith with Ireland.

“In him the unhappy Irish trick of looking backward instead of forward will spend itself, and Ireland, sure of her future, will forget old wounds.”

H. V. Morton, *In Search of Ireland*.



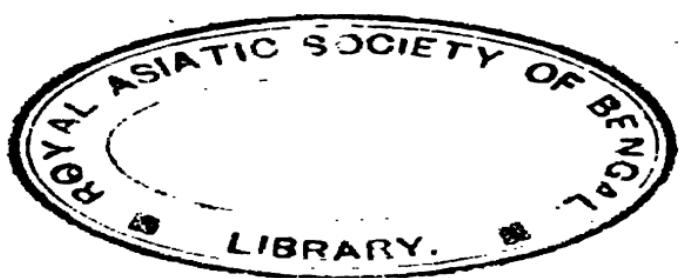


"I invoke to-day all these virtues
Against every hostile merciless power
Which may assail my body and my soul
Against the incantations of false prophets
Against the black laws of heathenism
Against the false laws of heresy..."

ST. PATRICK'S PRAYER.

“SURSUM CORDA”

A drawing by 'Tabard' published in the *Whitehall Gazette*, 1932



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